Silent Revolution Series

# Emotion Seduction & Intimacy

## Alternative Perspectives on Human Behaviour

Third Edition

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# Introduction

## Acknowledgements

All books are collective enterprises with the author taking the lead. This one is no different. My thanks must go to all the people who have touched my life in a way that informs this book, and particularly to those who have read, fed back and argued about its contents with me. I want to take this opportunity to thank you all. Special thanks are due to a number of people.

Firstly, my wife Caroline, who has ridden with me through the ups and downs of life. Her contribution to this book goes far deeper than the words on the page. She has her own stories to tell and hearing them over the years has been integral to my understanding of how relationships in the workplace reach into all parts of our lives.

To Poonam, my muse in business, I owe both a personal and professional debt. On a personal level, she has shown unstinting faith that I am "an honest sort" with something worthwhile to say. On a professional level, she has given tremendous support to the perspectives articulated in my earlier work and this book takes us both closer to making dreams come true.

Professors John Cullen and Phil Johnson deserve a mention for their guidance and insights into the material presented here, particularly with regard to social control and workplace culture. Minna Leinonen pointed me to the work of Jeff Hearn and Wendy Parkin, and followed this by building my confidence by writing with me on gender issues. Her contribution created more balance in my thinking. Stephen Robinson deserves credit for reading and raising issues in the early drafts of Chapters 1-5, while Jane and Andrew Cook's thoughtful contribution to the discussion on defining seduction more positively (Chapter 3) deserves appreciation. My

children, Natasha and Bethany, allowed me to share stories about our family life in ways that show how deeply our feelings underpin attempts to control or hurt others.

My thanks to Raymond Cuttill for accepting the challenge of first publishing this book. Following the print of 100 copies, an eBook version at Scribd triggered thousands of downloads indicating clear interest in the subject matter of the book. Publishing a text that questions prevailing wisdom on gender issues is a frustrating and occupationally dangerous activity, but in the last five years there has been a discernable change in the media and academia and the evolution of a more open-minded attitude.

My life has been a rich and varied one – there are so many people that I cannot name them all. There are a few friends, however, who I would like to acknowledge for developing my thinking on the matters in this book. My love to: Helen Peters, Richard Churches, Angela Howes, Clare Byrne, Iain and Marianne Carnegie, Sabine Maier, Steve Anscombe, Phil Cole, Karen Smith, Lawrence Clare, Lyndsey Maw, Suzy Brookes and Mike Haywood. For the last few years, I am indebted to professional colleagues at Sheffield Business School, particularly Liz Doherty and Tony Bennett who have provided feedback and support.

## Setting Out the Terrain

This book is a natural evolution for me after finishing a study on which I worked full-time for three years. It was written to take a break from academic writing but as it developed I found more secrets of life revealing themselves to me and I quickly got hooked. My emotions were fired as everything else stopped to finish the text.

The content of the book is purposely aimed at working people, particularly managers and professionals, who want to understand how seduction and sexuality are continually used to develop the relationships upon which business (and families) depend. It may find favour with a secondary group studying or teaching business, psychology, philosophy, gender studies, governance, sociology, human rights, politics and law.

Life is an endless process of probing and searching for satisfying relationships for the purpose of economic and social gain. We constantly try to seduce each other for different reasons. Beyond seduction to satisfy our sexual desires, there are employers seducing employees (and vice versa), salespeople seducing customers, consultants seducing clients, advertisers seducing consumers, writers seducing readers, musicians seducing listeners, and academics, scientists, religious leaders and politicians presenting seductive versions of "the truth".

The book contains stories of seduction in the public workplace and the impacts on our private emotions. In marriage, families and committed partnerships, we display our emotions more freely than at work. Learning to cope with them often leads to the most durable and meaningful relationships in our lives. Yet, at work, an "inappropriate" display of emotion can land a person in deep trouble, even result in their sacking or trigger widespread upheaval in the office. It made me question whether our attitude to emotions is actually helping business or hurting it.

I have adopted techniques common in social science to minimise authorial bias. One method is to focus on

conversations taking place around us, rather than relying on one-off interviews. Nevertheless, I have my own biases. I write about issues that interest and concern me first and foremost. One purpose of this introduction, therefore, is to set out my concerns to you so that you the reader can assess the extent to which this impacts on what I say in the book.

My own interest is the way emotion and intimacy drives the way we govern each other and to organise ourselves into social groups. By looking at conversations, it is possible to discover that productive relationships, generally, are far more equitable than we realise. Only when one party wants to punish the other do relationships change dramatically. When hostility is triggered, one party cuts off or alters the way they communicate. Sometimes they start shaping situations so they can hurt those who they think have hurt them. When this happens, we discover how power is organised, because one party is usually able to punish "the other" more completely and effectively than the other way around.

The desire to punish is rooted in emotional hurt so a key objective of this book is to show where emotional hurt comes from, and the ways that people punish each other when it occurs. The results, I have no doubt, will shock you and perhaps even rock your world a bit – at least I hope it does. As a consequence, a new debate will develop about techniques to investigate "misbehaviour", something I consider carefully in the final chapter.

## Winning and Losing

In our closest relationships we learn many things: how to let others win as a way of developing their confidence; how to win sometimes so that others learn to deal with the emotions aroused by losing. Learning to establish a balance between winning and losing, and teaching others how to cope with winning and losing, is an experience that is quite different from the "win, win, win" mentality that now pervades workplaces.

Winning is over-rated. Management researchers have long noted the cycle of rapid business success followed by

rapid business failure. Quick success breeds overconfidence and arrogance. Moreover, when winning becomes more important than supporting the development of human life, we start to undermine the very people who contribute to our own survival. Sometimes we mindlessly hurt without pause to consider the long-term consequences, then compound the problems by getting angry when others react to our own insensitivity. Forgiveness is a quality much needed, but rarely found, in management thinking, despite the competitive advantage to be gained through its adoption.

Failure is not a blot on our character, because in the process we learn to reflect and develop new ways of thinking. In personal and social environments, failure is the catalyst for profound learning out of which develops self-awareness, tolerance *and competitive advantage*. When those who fail in the workplace are sacked rather than supported, we marginalize the very people who are in the midst of learning the most and who potentially have the most to contribute to the future. It is this realisation that has fuelled an interest in the link between 'no blame' management cultures and commercial success[1].

## The Story So Far…

Interest in emotion was fuelled by the runaway success of Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence*.[2] As is the case with many popular psychology books, Goleman tends to view emotion as a product of genetic inheritance and upbringing. Branches of academia, such as cognitive and evolutionary psychology, also accept this presumption to understand 'personality'.

In the social sciences (including business studies) the seminal works on emotion take a different view. In Stephen Fineman's writings, for example, emotion is seen as a outcome of group life, something that is triggered by changes in our social status and relationships.[3] This theme has been picked up by some psychiatrists, such as William Glasser in *Choice Theory*.[4]

When people are asked to talk about emotions at work, they do not – unless prompted by researchers or

managers – talk about "job satisfaction" or a desire for "self-fulfilment". Instead they talk about their relationships with work colleagues, family and friends. What matters in assessing a person's emotional behaviour, therefore, is the situation in the here and now, not what happened 10 or 20 years ago. The past may influence the way a person understands and deals with the present, but the problem to be solved – the feelings that are being experienced – are in the present situation, not the past.

Arlene Hochschild has documented another feature of emotional life at work - the way we are encouraged to adopt emotions when we interact with work colleagues, managers, clients, customers and suppliers.[5] Her concepts link back to Daniel Goleman but have a different slant. What Goleman calls 'emotional intelligence' Hochschild regards as 'emotional labour'. Unlike Goleman, who argues that emotional intelligence is beneficial to us as human beings, Hochschild brings out another aspect: constantly pretending or withholding emotions undermines our sense of self, affects our physical health and undermines our capacity to act morally.

In my own research,[6] I show how emotional skills – however we label them - take individuals into the heart of complex social networks. Whether in business or politics, in love triangles or large families, we are drawn to those who trigger positive emotions in us, and we consider them more desirable and trustworthy. People find themselves, whether by their own design, or the manoeuvrings of others, embedded in complex and intimate relationships. The way people handle this is an important dimension of leadership but it is rarely discussed as a management topic.

My own contribution, therefore, was to demonstrate scientifically how company governance practices, and the development of social structures at work, are partly rooted in the way we handle intimacy and emotionality. Courtship rituals, and our interests as parents, influence the development of workplace hierarchies. They have an impact that compares to market-forces, legal regulations and company rules.

Another couple who confront the issue of intimacy are Andrew and Nada Kakabadse.[7] They found that intimacy at work is a common experience, and the benefits are astonishingly enduring, often lasting a life-time. After my own study into workplace culture, I returned to their work and the stories had an even more profound effect on me. The insights that developed in second reading take form and expression in these pages. In their conclusions, the Kakabadses talk of a need for people at work, particularly managers, to develop greater sensitivity so they can handle intimacy and emotionality more effectively. This recommendation was underpinned by a survey finding that only 11% of people at work think relationship issues are handled well, and that only 2% believe that policy-based approaches to sexual conflict make a positive contribution.

The recent legislative attempts to bring about improvements in behaviour by making employers responsible for equality are – in the eyes of some – making matters much worse. Does it make sense to make managers legally responsible for preventing the *accidental* upset of people at work? A person who accidentally upsets another can now be sacked if it can be shown that the effect of their behaviour was intimidating (even if unintended). Managers can be found guilty of failing to prevent a hostile environment if they do not remove a person who accidentally causes another distress.

As I show in this book, a person's motive may be to show care for another person or to debate discrimination issues affecting their own workplace, or just a straightforward positive response to the other's obvious interest. The result of legislative change is that we are developing a culture that frustrates the pursuit of equality by outlawing the emotionality of intimacy and debate. In effect, we are knowingly or unknowingly making democracy illegal.

At the same time, our world is increasingly driven by intolerance. In politics, we see world leaders ordering troops into Iraq justified, not on the basis of credible evidence of a threat to our nation, but to assuage the fears and suspicions of our leaders. Riots erupt the world over

after publication of a blasphemous cartoon just as 'democracy' is established in Iraq. In our own society, members of religious minorities fear prosecution for incitement to terrorism for publicly debating how to respond to their own government bombing members of their family in other countries (even when a majority of all citizens opposed the war). We see Labour Party stewards ejecting an old-age pensioner for holding a political leader to account at a 'democratic' conference and then using anti-terror laws to prevent his further participation. At work, the result of 'tightening up' sexual discrimination legislation is that people can be demoted or sacked for trying to debate issues of sex discrimination, including something as trivial as choosing not to wear a tie.

This book, therefore, is a timely contribution that argues why and how we will benefit by listening to our own and others' emotions as well as their words. This is a time to develop our capacity for tolerance and sensitivity. Secondly, I will argue that during conflict, the priority is to understand the source of emotion - both in ourselves and others – rather than stamp it out through authoritarian behaviour, discipline, punishment and exclusion. To this end, I provide a wealth of stories that will help to understand the interconnections between different areas of our lives.

## The Science of Emotion

Emotions – our own and others' – have had a raw deal in the credibility stakes, in both personal and professional worlds, for around 200 years. In this book, I discuss how science itself is beginning to establish how emotions underpin our intelligence. We have an innate ability to be sensitive, and this sensitivity allows us to discovers ways of thinking that help us to survive. While the current wave of intolerance is rooted in a global fear about our collective survival, the fear is rational even if the reactions to it are not.

As a social scientist, I do not believe anyone can be completely objective. Even maths – often cited as the purest of sciences – is a symbolic language. It is an

invention by human beings to represent the world as mathematicians see it. The bias lies not in its inability to precisely depict what is observed (it does this rather well) but in the purposes behind particular observations and the way we report them.

Maths, in principle, is no different from other ways of representing the world. I explore human existence using other symbols - words and diagrams. These precisely depict what I observe - just like the symbols of the mathematician. While they might be more subtle and ambiguous than mathematical formulae, they are no less scientific. The insights and understandings that words and diagrams have generated over the centuries compares favourably to the mathematical formulae of some economists.

Bringing together different worlds – in this case reconciling neuroscience with anthropology - creates a marriage between the natural and social sciences. As a result, scientific insights are more profound. It means that a better informed debate can thrive and each of us can apply what we learn in the here and now to improve our lives.

## My Personal Concerns and Interests

There was a period of intense sadness in the middle of writing this book. You will read about this in Chapter 6. The sadness came from realising that 25 years of commitment to equality counted for nothing when I found myself in the middle of a dispute. In my teens I felt sympathy for, and actively supported, the women's movement for emancipation. My contribution in adult life was a commitment to listen to women, engage with them in conversation over gender issues, work with them as equals, support their technical and emotional development when able (and they were willing), promote them when they were the best candidate for the job. I trusted they would do all these things for me. At times I stood up and challenged sexist and racist attitudes that limited others' potential.

I know that by doing so, I did some good. The sadness came when I tried to do the same for men, and more

recently myself. This process started privately about 10 years ago, but in the workplace and publicly I did not feel sufficiently confident until eight years later. By that time, double-standards towards men's and women's behaviour had become so extreme that they screamed out to be challenged, documented and brought into the public domain. But I was afraid to speak up. I am, therefore, grateful to those people, often women, who helped me through that fear. Speaking up has not been easy and sometimes made me unpopular.

The double-standards regarding men's and women's sexuality finds expression in the workplace. I learnt to my personal cost that responding to women's flirty behaviour by engaging in light-hearted banter can threaten both my career and family. One female manager was apparently so upset at my joke about her gender sensitivity, that her employer - a client with whom I had an unproblematic relationship for half my working life - no longer felt it could retain my consultancy services.

The following week, I watched Trinny and Susannah tell a businesswoman on prime time TV "what a great pair of tits you've got, get them out more" to help her promote her *business*. Women enjoy media support to use their sexuality in the workplace while men's light-hearted sexual jokes (even when intended to raise gender inequality issues) can put their careers and marriages at risk.

It prompted me to return to studies I had found on false claims. I remembered an extensive investigation, with a rigorous methodology, that investigated over 500 allegations.[8] Three researchers found that 60% of sexual allegations turned out to be false. The three researchers were so sceptical of the findings that they did two follow up studies. The 60% figure held. It also holds in the Kakabadse's study on the issue of false claims about sexual harassment. To my surprise, the figure also emerged in a study of over 2,000 women in 10 cities in a completely different cultural context. They were asked if they would tell anyone if they were sexually attracted to a man at work.[9] Over half (61%) would not discuss this with anyone - not even their best friend.

This means that there is a hidden side to sexual harassment that is important to both women and men, but for different reasons. As many men have their lives disrupted or destroyed by false claims as women by actual harassment. In unravelling this, I also found that the reason for the high percentage of false allegations is women's need to hide their (potential) infidelities *from other men*. As those studying courtship have found, 93% of men and 82% of women in long-term relationships claim others have attempted to seduce them into a new long-term relationship.[10] Other studies show that the majority of sexual relationships are initiated by women rather than men (the most reliable research puts this at just under 70%).[11]

The disparities in men's and women's claims are themselves interesting. Logically for every man who starts a new sexual relationship with a women, there is a women who starts one with a man. Logically, there must be equal numbers of women and men in committed relationships and marriages. Why, then are the claims of men and women different? This tells its own story.

It turns out that it is exceptional, rather than normal, to be committed to life-long fidelity. Men and women, however, differ in their desire for affairs and new relationships. In a cross-cultural study of 37 countries it was found that women typically desire about 5 sexual relationships in a lifetime while men desire 18 (this is, of course, completely different from what actually occurs).[12] Women have developed extraordinarily sophisticated ways to hide their activities, while men are less concerned.

Evolutionary psychologists explain the differences in terms of genetic desires for sex (amongst men) and wealth (amongst women).[13] My own view is different – that each sex attempts to restore equality created by other cultural inequalities. Men's supposed greater desire for sex can be understood as a response to the way women withhold sex to seduce men (to obtain wealth and security they would otherwise not have). Women's supposed greater desire for wealth can be understood as a response to the way men withhold it until a woman will consent to

sex (to obtain the pleasures they would otherwise not have).

Germaine Greer writes in the introduction to *The Female Eunuch* that women should withhold sex from men until they are prepared to commit (to the relationship).[14] Derek Vitalio writes in *Seduction Science* that men should withhold dating (i.e. a relationship) from women until they are prepared to commit (to sex).[15] The most seductive behaviour, each argues, is to withhold what the other most desires until confident that the relationship will be equitable. Bring these attitudes together, however, and it is obvious that no good relationship can develop between two people with such attitudes. To propagate such views is, as Warren Farrell claims, a programme for divorce training.

Differences do resurface again and again, during courtship and particularly when children are born because our biological roles force us to take different perspectives and divide our labour (at least in the short term). After children are born, it is men who obsess about wealth, and women who obsess about sex.[16] Each has to cope with a deficiency created by roles that are sometimes forced on us by family and institutional pressures. Men tend to intensify their commitment to work colleagues while women take refuge in romance novels and friendship networks. Both struggle to cope with the loss of intimacy created by the demands of childraising.[17]

Ironically, as will be slowly revealed in this book, the most productive and pleasurable relationships occur when we do not withhold from "the other" and fight against these cultural pressures to restore equity. This applies as much to work colleagues, and employer/employee relationships, as men and women in sexual relationships. Unravelling this paradox is difficult but worthwhile because the pursuit of sexual emancipation is simultaneously the pursuit for social and economic democracy. Equitable relationships turn out to be strongly linked to workplace efficiency and the highest levels of productivity, as well as seduction and emotional satisfaction.[18]

## The Structure of the Book

The book is driven by personal stories – both my own and those who have touched my life, as well as people who have participated in academic research. The stories from my personal life are told by the people themselves. Stories from research studies and work experiences are, for the most part, reported by fictional characters. Given the sensitivity of the discussions, it is necessary to protect the privacy and identity of the people who divulged their feelings on deeply personal issues. All the quotations, however, contain the words of real people reacting to real-life situations – nothing in these pages is an invention.

Interspersed with these personal accounts is discussion of issues that create debate amongst managers and academics. These are drawn from books and studies on emotion, organisation behaviour, intimacy and sexual behaviour. These appear throughout, sometimes inset into the main text on the left hand side of the page. Their purpose is to offer provocative findings that stimulate reflection and debate. The books and studies from which these are drawn have been included in two bibliographies (for the casual and serious reader).

The book is organised into 7 chapters. Each chapter builds on the previous one to deepen understanding and develop management learning. Chapter 1 sets out to shake up taken-for-granted assumptions about the value and role of emotions, as well as offering new perspectives on sexual stereotypes. In Chapter 2 (What are Emotions?), the role and purpose of emotions is examined from a variety of perspectives. These are contrasted with oft-quoted views that emotions are a problematic inheritance threatening the modern organisation with "irrational" behaviour. Emotions are far from irrational, but can still have unpredictable and destructive outcomes. Understanding their role and purpose helps develop new approaches to management.

In Chapter 3 (Friendship and Flirting) the focus changes to seduction. I offer a series of stories about relationship formation then build a framework to help understand how seduction is a process by which people make commitments to emotionally safe relationships. It

examines how "couples" form relationships: men and women, business colleagues, employer and employee, supplier and customer. Particular attention is given to the role of reciprocal, enjoyable (but often silent) behaviours.

Seldom does a day go by without a politician or media figure discussing the need to create discipline in our society. Criminologists, however, have a collective despair about both prisons and the criminal justice system. In Chapter 4 (Control and Discipline), I add to this debate by examining the impact of disciplining others. Attempts to control others can have side-effects that help neither party. On this part of the journey we see how relationships are broken when we do not wish to continue them; how we discipline others to avoid personal responsibility; how we blame others to maintain a positive self-image.

The propensity to build up leaders into celebrities, with expectations that they should be all-knowing and all-seeing is a practice beloved of the modern media and culture. In Chapter 5 (Leaders and Followers), the reality of leadership is shown to be quite different. Are leaders the strongest members of a group or the weakest? Might they more realistically be regarded as followers? A review of the role of laughter, humour and misbehaviour points us to the surprising and complex relationship between leaders and followers.

Our most powerful feelings are sexual. Occasionally, an uneasy and fragile consensus is shattered by a complex network of desires. On other occasions our desires underpin strong relationships that build whole communities. The way we understand sexuality and gender relations has changed so much that new notions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour have impacted on men and women at work. The double-standards that still exist in modern life, and the disturbing research findings that are fuelling attempts to redress these inequalities, are exposed in chapter 6 (Sexual Conflict).

In the final chapter (Coping Strategies), I reflect on the long-term benefits of intimacy in the workplace, and outline strategies to create a stimulating, productive and tolerant organisation. I also argue for a different

conception of power, as something that is embedded within, and expressed through, *relationships* rather than people. People are not powerful on their own – they are powerful *in relation to* other people. It is our capacity for intimacy, therefore, that enables groups of people to build powerful organisations. If one party stops listening or acting on the other's wishes, the "power" of both is taken away because the relationship no longer exists in a meaningful way. The organisation is also weakened.

By taking this perspective, a path opens up to address social cohesion problems and community relationship issues that affect our modern world. Instead of destroying communities by focussing too heavily on financial stability through authoritarian approaches to control and governance, we can begin to reintroduce a balance between personal values and professional power that conceives management as a means to an end, but not an end in itself. Organisations, as well as relationships between men and women, thrive when there is a pulsating peace rather than a worn out war.

In this second edition (developed to satisfy the emerging eBook market), some typographic errors and references have been corrected. The overall structure of the book and the argument are faithful to the original text.

- *Rory Ridley-Duff, June 2009*

## Notes on the Introduction

1 Clutterbuck, D., Megginson, D (2005) Making coaching work: Creating a coaching culture, London, CIPD. In the 64 steps towards a coaching culture, the development of a 'no blame' mentality is considered paramount.

2 Goleman, D. (1996) *Emotional Intelligence*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

3 Fineman, S (ed) (2000) *Emotion in Organizations,* 2nd edn, Sage Publications.

4 Glasser, W. (1998) *Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom,* Harper Perennial.

5 Hochschild, A. R. (1998) "Sociology of emotion as a way of seeing" in G. Bendelow and S. J. Williams (eds) *Emotions in Social Life,* London: Routelege.

6 Ridley-Duff, R. J. (2005) *Communitarian Perspectives on Corporate Governance,* Sheffield Hallam University.

7 Kakabadse, A., Kakabadse, N. (2004) *Intimacy: International Survey of the Sex Lives of People at Work,* Palgrave.

8 McDowell, P. (1985) "False Allegations", *Forensic Science Digest,* 11(4): 64.

9 See India Today (2003) *Sex and the Indian Woman,* September Cover Story.

10 Schmitt, D. P., Buss, D. M. (2001) "Human mate poaching: Tactics and temptations for infiltrating existing relationships", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 80: 894-918.

11 Moore, M. (1985) 'Nonverbal Courtship Patterns in Women: Contact and Consequences', *Ethnology and Sociobiology,* 6: 237-247. The author estimates that 66% of relationships are initiated non-verbally by women, considerably less than the 90% claimed by populist writers on sexual behaviour (e.g. Pease, A., Pease, B. (2004), *The Definitive Book of Body Language,* Orion, p. 290.)

12 See Buss, D. M., Abbott, M., Angleitner, A., Biaggio, A., Blanco-Villasenor, A., BruchonSchweittzer, M. [& 45 additional authors] (1990). "International preferences in selecting mates: A study of 37 societies", *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology,* 21: 5-47. See also, Buss D. M., Schimitt, D. P. (1993) "Sexual strategies theory: An evolutionary perspective on human mating", *Psychological Review,* 100: 204-232.

[13] Buss, D. M. (2002) "Human Mating Strategies", *Samdunfsokonemen,* 4 - 2002: 48-58

[14] Greer, G. (1999) *The Female Eunuch,* Flamingo.

[15] Vitalio, D. (2005) *Seduction Science,* www.seductionscience.com.

[16] Farrell, W. (1986) *Why Men Are The Way They Are,* London, Bantam Books, Chapters 4, 5, 6 ("Why are Men So Preoccupied with Sex and Success", "Why Men Don't Listen", "Why Are Men So Afraid of Commitment").

[17] Farrell, W. (2000) *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say,* New York, Tarcher/Putnam, pp. 193-195. Romance novels account for 40% of all paperback sales and have a readership that is 98% female.

[18] Adams, J. S. (1965) "Inequity in Social Exchanges" in Berkowitz (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, New York, Academic Press, 2: 67-300. See also Whyte, W. F., Whyte, K. K. (1991) *Making Mondragon*, New York: ILR Press/Itchaca and Turnbull, S. (1994) "Stakeholder Democracy: Redesigning The Governance of Firms and Bureaucracies", *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 23(3): 321-360.

# Chapter 1 – In the Beginning…….

## Overview

The workplace is full of emotion, nearly all of it rooted in figuring out how to cope with the relationships needed to fulfil corporate and personal goals. The two quotes below illustrate different types of emotion at work, each rooted in an aspect of life that is central to our existence.

> *"[The meetings] were chaos. We would stay there for hours, ironing out the issues, until we came to something…At times, the meetings would get so violent that people almost went across the table at each other…people yelled. They waved their arms around and pounded on tables. Faces would get red and veins bulged out."* [1]

The quote describes meetings between managers and technicians in one of the most successful companies of modern times. As in other 'great' companies, emotional displays and heated debate are a common and recurring finding – something that contrasts sharply with the calm and disciplined behaviour expected by leaders of less 'successful' organisations. Why do company members sometimes get so emotional about the future of a company? Because company success and survival generates the wealth that enables us to house, clothe and feed ourselves, our partners and our children.

> *"Hayley kept coming up and interrupting me from time to time. I'm sure she didn't need to, she just liked to. She was wearing a lovely black top so I didn't mind being interrupted by her at all. We had lunch again, and again I felt - just like yesterday - that there was a bit of sexual banter going on. At one point she said "Ben, are you flirting with me?" I said "Yes, just a bit", then I said "I trust you'll tell me to stop if you don't like it". She came straight*

*over and stood very close to me, then giggled in a girlish way. She started asking my feelings about children, did I want children in the future? I also asked her. In my head I'm asking myself "what is going on here?" These are the kind of questions that you start to ask someone when you might have a romantic relationship"* [2]

This is Ben's reaction to Hayley's behaviour a few days after Hayley learnt that Ben had serious problems in his 6-year relationship. Their flirty relationship changed into a close friendship. It was short-lived because someone at work accused Ben of behaving in an "unprofessional" way. Why do people get so emotional about others' personal relationships? Because we may have to compete for the best partners (both in business and in love) so that we can fulfil our life goals and enjoy the intimacy and pleasure that come from a close relationship.

The dominant managerial discourse regarding emotions at work, however, is to be suspicious of them, ignore them, attempt to suppress them, even get rid of them. The modern trend is to encourage "professionalism" with every breath, a euphemism for the suppression of emotion and avoidance of intimacy. The very nature of business, however, and particularly leadership, is to engage in a series of deliberate interventions that impact on the emotions of employees, suppliers, customers, board members and investors to stimulate and sustain a network capable of achieving a variety of social and financial goals. The issue, therefore, is not emotions, but *whose* emotions are legitimised.

Researchers Jeff Hearn and Wendy Parkin commented nearly 20 years ago that management books give the impression that "organisations, so finely analysed, are inhabited by a breed of strange, asexual eunuch figures…"[3]. This book not only accepts men and women as sexual, it argues that success in business is often linked to the same skills used to create and sustain sexual relationships. No area of our life is unaffected, and this book develops themes that inform management strategies for coping with (and benefiting from) emotional life in the workplace.

The journey I take – and advice that I present – is deeply personal. While there is a media image of business leaders and decision-makers as cool rational beings, this is an image removed from reality. No business leader I have talked to, or worked with, refrains from using emotional appeals as part of the leadership process. A leader without "strong personal opinions" is about as rare as a man or woman who thinks Catherine Zeta Jones is physically ugly.

Leaders are emotional and this is why others follow their lead. Changes in workplace policy and practice occur when emotions have been deeply affected by a situation or event and there is an emotional need for harmony and stability. Projects are adopted, business plans are developed, in response to someone's passionate desire to provide a particular product or service. Their enthusiasm and commitment are factors at least as important as any economic argument – without their zeal the project will not succeed.

So much time is spent trying to suppress feelings that we pay much too little attention to understanding them and using them intelligently. The attempt to suppress feelings, and a failure to understand their roots, can lead to behaviours that others construe as bizarre, sometimes resulting in misunderstanding, social division and conflict.

This book exposes our emotions and their impacts on organisation behaviour. It examines aspects of working life that are poorly understood: the relationship between emotion and decision-making; the role and impact of "fun"; both the enjoyment and discomfort of those engaging in sexual behaviour; the impact of leaders on followers; the impact of followers on leaders; the complex process of sexual conflict.

The boundaries are drawn widely, offering a perspective that emotions are the product of people interacting with each other, not just attributes of personality. Emotions are central - the vital ingredients that propel us to act and make decisions that are meaningful. The experiences recounted illustrate how this happens, the consequences that occur, and the management strategies that can harness them effectively.

## A Perspective on Sexism

My wife, Caroline, is without doubt the funniest woman I have ever met, second only to Victoria Wood in my eyes. Back in the 1980s she treated me to wonderful impressions of Margaret Thatcher's cookery class, in which she made pies out of Arthur Scargill and fed them to her cabinet (the wooden one in our dining room). In the 1990s, she invented Funny Mummy for our children, along with her friends Finny Mimmy, Fanny Manny, Chalky Charlie and Bernard (Chalky Charlie's monkey). To live with such a person is a delight.

More recently, not least because of her knowledge of the events unfolding in my work, she has turned her attention to satirising the state of gender equality in the 21st Century:

*From: Caroline Ridley-Duff*
*To: Rory Ridley-Duff*
*Sent: 17th December 2005*
*Re: Gender Study*

*The following is taken from Dr Darren Barrel's latest best-selling book:* ***Why Men Get Stuffed at Christmas***

*Six things you never knew about Christmas:*

*A staggering 1 in 8 men are injured each year in Christmas related accidents ranging from fairy light electrocutions to Santa-beard induced asthma attacks.*

*80% of men claim to have been bullied by wives/partners into dressing up as Father Christmas at some time in their life. Many of the men resented being made to wear prickly beards but were too afraid to refuse. If they did, they were accused of having no Christmas spirit or letting their children down. Significantly, not a single man in the study has* ***ever*** *put pressure upon a woman to wear a false beard.*

*95% of men claim to have been accosted at some time by a woman dressed in a sexy Santa suit on a Christmas pub crawl or office party. Not one of these men reported it as sexual harassment. Yet 99.8% women admitted having*

*brought a law suit against a 'randy git' in a Father Christmas suit at least once in their life time.*

*Feminists see Father Christmas as a symbol of male power, a patriarchal figure in charge of the presents who controls Christmas. A new study, however, argues that Father Christmas shows the caring, child-focussed, compassionate, tender qualities of men, drawing attention to the time and energy they commit to providing for their children. One surprise finding was that men make this extra effort because most women won't tolerate them taking over childcare for more than one day a year.*

*It is a myth that men don't want to go near the kitchen when Christmas dinner is being prepared. 92% of men said they have been hit over the head with a sherry bottle for trying to "sabotage" Christmas dinner or "take over" when they offered to help their wives – 5% had to be treated in hospital for injuries when the bottle smashed. Not one of them reported this as domestic violence, but 52% said they got away with passing off their cuts and bruises to friends and family as a 'sport's injury'.*

*In one harrowing story, a man's attempt to help in the kitchen led to criminal charges being brought against him after his wife accused him of bestiality when she found him with his hand up a goose. If he had been a woman, would the police have taken such a charge seriously? The man's hand was full of sage and onion stuffing at the time, but the police refused to accept his explanation that he was performing a necessary culinary manoeuvre.*

*If you want to read more about the politics of gender, why not try one of the following publications by the same author:*

*Why Men Fight Wars and Women Start Them*

*Men Can't Eat What Women Won't Cook*

*Understanding – the New Viagra.*

Powerful stuff, humour. When women start writing like this it dawns on you that 'the times they are a

changin'! It has been hard for Caroline to live with me at times over the last 10 years as the experiences I have witnessed gradually changed me. Nor, I suspect, was it easy for the husbands of women in the suffragette movement when other men contemptuously suggested that they 'could not control their women'.

I am grateful for her humour because it shows how men and women can survive together, continue to find ways to love, while also exposing hypocrisy. Caroline still has to put up with her own problems at work – the battle for respect is not over for women either. Men who believe that it is okay to joke "she's putting her knickers on right now" when a clerk asks why she is late for court, still don't "get it". But her wit remains her greatest asset. When one colleague asked her "Do you think we'll ever have sex?" she did not miss a beat before replying "Yes – of course. Just not together."

The female respondents in surveys of sex at work generally report that most women find men's attempts at sexual humour irritating rather than unbearable, and also conclude that it is by no means clear that women are unwilling participants in sexually risqué encounters. Many welcomed and enjoyed the banter, particularly when they could participate on equal terms.[4]

And, as I have found, once I started to see the world as Caroline saw it, it occurred to me just how many times I have been "harassed" by female employees, managers and research participants who – without any invitation – touched me, groped my arse, or plonked themselves on my lap at a party and tried to kiss me, or took advantage of my goodwill to get free lunches or drinks. These are not difficult to cope with, but the hackles do start to rise when the same people start claiming they are victims of sexist behaviour by men.

This kind of behaviour is in a different league, however, from being required to perform sexual favours for a promotion or to keep a job, or facing a formal (or behinds the scenes) accusation of "unprofessional" behaviour for nothing more than inviting someone for a drink, or trying to develop informality to promote a better working relationship. In these cases, a man or woman's job comes under threat and making a complaint might

make matters worse. Women now – usually – can get redress if they want to, but it is a repeated research finding that in cases of sexual conflict, men's response to women's behaviour is now more likely to get the *man* a demotion or the sack than the woman[5]. This is a reversal of the situation 30 years ago.

These situations, therefore, threaten more than workplace stability. They threaten relationships outside work, particularly if a man's wife/girlfriend will not believe his innocence. It can result in the loss of both trust and income on which other women, men and children depend, and have ripple effects on other places of work.

Throughout this book, I draw together the strands of a debate to argue for a new conception of power – one that recognises that power is embedded in intimate relationships. When one party damages or reduces the intimacy, *both* parties suffer a loss of power. The power to accuse, blame and exclude does not 'control' a situation. Firstly, it unjustly ostracises the person accused and prevents them having a right of reply except through the courts. Secondly, it compromises the power of the accuser by decreasing others comfort working with them. The silences that follow a person who makes unfounded accusations can leave them feeling even more vulnerable and defensive.

By conceptualising power differently, it becomes possible to define a management strategy for a "power full" organisation – places where both women and men can exercise more power and speak their mind on more issues, while remaining sensitive to other points of view. By removing taboos, places of work become more enjoyable places to be. This is not just a supposition, there is now a considerable body of opinion, and research, that shows how the expression of strong emotions combined with tolerance for diversity creates thriving and productive organisations[6].

## No Sex Please – We're British!

'No sex' policies have been on the increase due to litigation on sexual harassment. Recent changes in the

law now make it possible to prosecute or sack someone if the *effect* of their behaviour is to intimidate or degrade someone – regardless of the intention. As a result, it is now a requirement that managers prevent people accidentally upsetting someone else at work or take action if they do. Throughout the book, I give examples of (what may turn out to be) perverse and unjust outcomes that result from these legal and cultural changes.

The issues surrounding sexual relationships and flirting are particularly important to men. As Mariella Frostrup reported in her documentary *Backlash,*[7] and Michael Buerk in his documentary *What are Men For,*[8] women are now openly sexual both inside and outside work, and can generally be so without putting their jobs at risk. Men, on the other hand, can be summarily sacked for risqué comments or emails. Zero tolerance, it seems, applies more to men's sexual behaviour. Nevertheless, as the high profile case of Faria Alam at the Football Association illustrated, if women are continually sexual at work, they can also be sacked and the courts will not view this as sex discrimination.[9]

Warren Farrell, one of the intellectual founders of the men's equality movement, summarises the politics of the issue as follows:

> *In one decade, women got more protection against offensive jokes in the workplace than men got in centuries against being killed… It leaves almost every male executive vulnerable to having his career ruined and almost every company with male executives vulnerable to having a finely honed management team broken up, its morale destroyed, and the remaining executives walking on eggshells. All this is an invitation to executive hypocrisy – in which [everyone] shuts their mouth when a woman comes into the room, thus creating genuine discrimination and a thick-glassed ceiling. The woman who wants real equality pays a big price.*[10]

A few years later, he elaborated on the price that women pay, and the damage it is doing to personal relationships:

*If a man is not speaking up out of a need to protect, he is creating something worse than a parent-child relationship. He becomes like a permissive parent who soon finds himself needing protection from the child who knows no one's perspective but her or his own. This is what men's silence has created both individually and socially.*

*It is not the men who confront women directly that women need to fear; it is the men who fear confronting women because they don't think there's any hope, they "know" she'll never understand, or they're unwilling to risk the possibility that she will call him "woman hater". When men do not speak up it demonstrates a blend of fear of women and contempt for women with a lack of courage. That cannot co-exist with truly loving a woman as an equal.*

*In contrast, a man who speaks up is engaged. A man who is engaged cares. He has hope. He is risking for the hope of intimacy. But a man needs to let a woman know that is his intent.*[11]

I declare with all my heart and head that this is my intent. By speaking up, I am attempting to engage and care.

There are two possible responses to problems created by sex discrimination legislation. The first is to repeal it. This would upset a great many who have dedicated their lives to taking forward an agenda for equality. It would set us back two generations. I prefer a second option - to confront, as feminists did in the 1960s and 1970s, the double-standards that are now being applied to the emotional reactions of men and women over sexual behaviour at work. By doing this, we can update our understanding of what constitutes reasonable sexual behaviour and reduce both actual harassment as well as false claims of harassment.

False accusations are as emotive as truthful ones – perhaps more so. It may also, therefore, be a good time to examine the power that the law currently provides for a person to accuse without taking responsibility for their accusation. In examining this, inequities in investigation processes can be discussed, as well as inequities in the

*application* of the law. The starting point for this is a better understanding of how relationships form, develop and breakdown.

One particular concern is the impact of withdrawing from "the other" in ways that are emotionally immature and socially unjust. Emotionally immature people engage in malicious behaviour by blaming "the other" for their own feelings. It is important, therefore, that managers come to understand that shows of distress do not always indicate who is being victimised and who is being hurt. There are occasions when the person who is distressed needs support rather than vindication to process their emotions. Our culturally acquired desire to protect ourselves, and particularly to protect women, means that handling such issues need special consideration.

How we legitimise and illegitimise (sexual) behaviour has a profound impact on the way we understand, tolerate and interpret it. It feeds directly into the way people are governed at work (and in society generally). A better understanding broadens the strategies for managers and policy-makers to develop approaches and processes to deal with it, not just to avoid conflict, but to construct resolution processes that build trust, create emotional stability, and improve productivity and profitability. It is possible to create 'knowledge' that brings about win-win results, more opportunities for intimacy, more social cohesion (but not necessarily more social harmony). To get there we must traverse some difficult and politically incorrect waters.

## Setting the Agenda for Equality

I love my sister. She did so much to start me on the road that led to this book that she could almost be considered its co-author. Despite our closeness, there have been occasions when I felt awkward talking to her. I was afraid she would think me either ignorant or argumentative. Walking into her house and reading postcards on her kitchen board saying "men have only two faults: everything they do and everything they say" or "grow your own dope: plant a man!" does not create an environment

conducive to equitable dialogue. I could laugh – and still do - but their offence, however unintentional, was not lost on me either.

It was not my hope that by providing support to the women's movement – and women individually - that the result should be the ridicule of my own sex, or workplace cultures in which men are disciplined, or even sacked, for causing mild offence (and where the same rules do not apply to women). The kind of emancipatory movement I wanted to be part of was one in which all sexualities lost their inhibitions together and grew more open-minded and accepting of each other.

Emotion is never far away when explanations are developed. The women's movement in the early 1900s was fuelled by a desire for equality in law. The movement in the 1960s was fuelled by a desire for equality in culture. Many women were experiencing divorce, or losing their "fear of flying" by leaving the men with whom they had set up homes. They experimented with a variety of lifestyles. Some succeeded, but others were left bereft of attention and affection, or alienated from it, struggling to find dignity at work.[12]

This manifest itself in anger and a demand for workplace equality. Sexually, it manifest itself in a campaign to end sex discrimination and harassment so that the women could build independent lives. Their need to work – and succeed at work – was now as urgent as the men who were supporting wives and children at home. Striving for independence had a price, however. The emotions aroused by shattered romantic aspirations and the pain of rejection fed the emergence of more radical political movements.

The same is happening now amongst men. The contemporary men's movement is fuelled by the goal of equal rights for male parents. Theoretically this exists in law – as it did for women at work in the 1920s – but cultural norms deny men equality. Seeking equality at home means obtaining equality at work (so that men have time and opportunity to be at home). In this process men have discovered that they are not as equal (either at home or at work) as they thought they were.[13]

The men's movement has also grown out of emotional hurt. The most radicalised have been rejected by women learning to fly, or who prefer the alternative lifestyles on offer rather than sharing their life with a man. When men are used to father children but later denied equal choices and rights over abortion and child raising, it can feel – to the men – like a sexual violation. In this sense, the psychological impacts have been compared to rape.

At work, the most emotive issue is reactions to courtship – that is a theme that will recur frequently in the pages that follow. To *respond* to flirting and then find oneself out of a job is now a more common experience for men than women (a reverse of the situation in the 1960s/1970s).[14] It leaves behind confusion and anger. It also impacts on entire social networks as people deal with the outcome of conflict.[15] While studies have repeatedly shown that both men and women desire "fun" at work,[16] there are others – those currently shaping our laws – who frame this as harassment and shout "foul" when it occurs. Both camps get angry at the other and the dividing line here is not between men and women so much as between liberals and conservatives over what is, and is not, permissible at work.

It had not occurred to me before writing this book, for example, how often the person – both male and female - making an accusation of "inappropriate" sexual behaviour, was not in a relationship, or in an uncommitted or unhappy relationship. The sample is too small to generalise, but it raised questions in my mind that I, and others, can pursue in future work. In particular, it suggested to me that the party most obsessed about forming a more satisfying sexual relationship will typically be the person who is currently not in one, rather than the party who is accused of sexual misbehaviour.

## To the Reader

To the women who read this book, I would like to ask for patience. When I first read feminist books written by women, I found them both interesting and unsettling.

The mixture of feelings came from the unease I felt when confronting myself as women see me. When finally I started to read books written by men about the same issues, my reaction was "of course, how obvious!" Their accounts rang true (for me) much more frequently than the books written by women. This book, however, may disturb you in the way that early feminist works disturbed me. I can see, with hindsight, that this sense of unease was created by women's struggle to understand themselves in relation to men. This book is part of my struggle to understand myself in relation to women. I hope you will work through the feelings this book arouses so that you can love men more fully, and also gain a fuller appreciation of your power to influence and control men's behaviour.

To the men who read this book, I would like to ask for restraint. I found it hard – just as many women did – to love men after the revelations of the last 30 years regarding violence and harassment. It has taken a while to come to terms with men's point of view because their contribution to the debate (and accounts of their experience) have been silenced or edited by angry men and women. The temptation is to argue men's case with too much passion and lose sight of women's perspectives and legitimate concerns. I do not see this as a men's book – it is a book for both sexes. It will, hopefully, help men to understand their own issues and redress imbalances in the debate that have developed over the last 30 years. In as much as there are more men engaged in entrepreneurial and managerial careers, it may find a bigger audience amongst men than women.

For the record, my own view is that men seldom set out to hurt women, and women seldom set out to hurt men, but both seek to develop and defend their interests. Men and women, however, can feel hurt when their close friends and partners (whether at work or home) form new relationships with other people. If it is not possible to release these feelings of hurt, a desire builds to punish "the other" for neglecting the relationship. On the other side, when two people decide to pursue a new relationship at the expense of their old ones, the new

couple *work together* to end relationships that threaten their desire to be together.

Hard as it is to cope, human beings behave this way when they are trying to build strong relationships to ensure their well-being in the future. It is always an emotional (and sometimes violent) process. Seen from only one perspective it looks unfair and one-sided. But seen as an expression of mutual desire, or as an attempt to develop shared goals or enjoy one another's company, we can start to see an unquenchable thirst for passion and intimacy that is shared by women and men together.

By rooting our understanding of organisation behaviour in this perspective, we can take a more positive look at conflict. Not only will I argue that sexual and emotional dynamics lie at the root of organisation behaviour but also that it is economically and socially progressive to ground management theory in this perspective. Let me start by reconsidering the role and purpose of emotions.

## Notes for Chapter 1

1 Collins, J. (2001) *Good to Great,* Random Business Books, p. 76.

2 Ridley-Duff, R. J. (2005) *Communitarian Perspectives on Corporate Governance*, PhD Thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, Appendix C, p. 3, http://www.scribd.com/doc/3271344/

3 Hearn, J. and Parkin, J. (1987) *Sex at Work: the power and paradox of organisation sexuality*, Wheatsheaf, p. 4.

4 Gutek, B. (1985) *Sex and the Workplace,* London: Jossey-Bass. See also Thompson and Ackroyd (1999), *Organisation Misbehaviour,* Sage Publications.

5 Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power, Why Men Are the Disposable Sex,* Berkley Books, Chapter 18 ("The Politics of Sex").

6 For research establishing the link between tolerance, diversity and company performance see Kotter, P., Heskett, J. (1992) *Corporate Culture and Performance*, Free Press. For mechanisms that permit diversity within corporate cultures see Turnbull, S. (1994) "Stakeholder Democracy: Redesigning The Governance of Firms and Bureaucracies", *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 23(3): 321-360. For a refreshing comparison between unitarist corporate cultures in North America and co-operative culture in the Basque region of Spain, see Cheney, G. (1999) *Values at Work*, ILR Press/Cornell University Press. To understand the negative health and operational effects of "visionary" corporate cultures see Kunda, G. (1992) *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press. For a theoretical and educational discussion of the problems created by attempts to manage people's values and ethics see Griseri, P. (1998) *Managing Values,* London: Macmillan.

7 British Broadcasting Corporation (2005), *Sex and the Nanny State,* 5th November 2005, BBC 2, 18.45 GMT. Presenter: Mariella Frostrup. Producer and Director: Steve Grandison. Executive Producer: Paul Woolwich.

8 Channel Five (2005) "What are Men For?", *Don't Get Me Started,* 23rd August 2005. Scripted and presented by Michael Buerk.

9 BBC News (2005) *Alam Loses FA Sex Case Tribunal,* 9th September 2005. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4230472.stm for details.

10 Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power, Why Men Are the Disposable Sex,* Berkley Books, p. 288, pp. 296-7.

[11] Farrell, W. (2000) *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say,* Tarcher/Putnam.

[12] See Friedan, B (1963) *The Feminine Mystique,* Penguin. For the fragmentation of the women's movement and the development and effects of radical feminism see Hoff-Sommers, C. (1995) *Who Stole Feminism? How women have betrayed women*, Simon & Schuster as well as Levy, A. (2005) *Female Chauvinist Pigs: The Rise of Raunch Culture,* New York, Free Press.

[13] Farrell, W. (2001) *Father and Child Reunion,* Sydney, Finch Publishing.

[14] Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power*, Berkeley Books. See Chapters 13 ("The Politics of Sex") and Chapter 14 ("The Politics of Rape").

[15] Ridley-Duff, R. J. (2005) *Communitarian Perspectives on Corporate Governance,* PhD Thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, Chapter 5, http://www.scribd.com/doc/3271344/

[16] Ackroyd, S, Thompson, P. (1999), *Organisation Misbehaviour,* Sage Publications, Chapter 6 ("Sexual Misbehaviour").

# Chapter 2 – What are Emotions?

## Overview

This chapter discusses emotions. The next chapter examines seduction and intimacy. If you cannot wait to read about seduction, you may be tempted to skip this chapter. Before you do so, take a quick look at the summary section. If you disagree with the points made, then this chapter has something to offer you. In this chapter, you will learn how emotions guide our behaviour to keep us safe, and even how emotions develop as a way to keep our decision-making rational.

**Psychologists call strong emotional reactions *cognitive dissonance.* Since the 1950s it has been one of the most studied phenomena in social psychology. While the impacts are not consistent across all people, there has been a marked tendency for people to change their opinion about something, including their own behaviour, if doing so improves their self-image. The impacts are too many to review here, but amongst the most notable side effects are prejudice against other social groups (blame others for their misfortune to avoid personal responsibility), rapid change in moral values (to justify opportunistic behaviour), rapid changes of social norms (to justify acts that would attract condemnation). Politicians deliberately exploit our propensity for cognitive dissonance to manipulate public opinion!**

My dictionary has a definition of emotion as "a strong mental or instinctive feeling". It cites a former meaning that emotion is "a disturbance of the mind".[1] When the word "emotional" is used of people, the same dictionary suggests that this is applied to someone who is "liable to excessive emotion" – it is certainly not intended as a compliment! In short, being emotional is not regarded as a good thing. Instead, it is seen as problematic and undesirable.

When I look back over my life, however, it occurs to me that it has been one long series of passionate encounters. First it was dinosaurs - spurred by a fantastic "Live and Learn" book. I just loved the pictures. Then

there was football, basketball and golf, then girls, then golf again, then music, then computer programming, politics, then women (and particularly my wife), followed by concern for gender issues, my children, and supporting them by creating and developing businesses. The latest passion (and I get emotional just talking about it) is writing.

Seen this way, emotions have a more positive character. They have been central to my desire to do things and gave me the energy and aspiration to live a fulfilling life. Once activated, the impossible became possible, strategies to overcome obstacles were planned, and I pursued them until I felt I had exhausted what there was to learn.

Business is often portrayed as an unemotional pursuit. Yet, the enduring memory I have of my own business life, and that of others I have observed, is just how emotional and intuitive it is. The process starts surprisingly early as the following conversation with the editor of this book, Poonam Thapa, shows.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Poonam* | *…without putting a complete damper on the business plan he is not taken up by the document. As he says it is not tight enough or sufficient justification on sales, pricing and marketing. Feels there is not enough market research - so on and so forth. I am quite upset and gritting my teeth…sometimes I feel like chucking everything and going back to full time work.x* |
| *Rory* | *If it is any consolation, we had* eight *versions of our business plan to satisfy different people/bodies* after *the first one was agreed internally with our first business adviser - I think their purpose is to drive us crazy……* |
| *Poonam* | *Reality sucks! I recognise what the business adviser is saying but it's still depressing. I am not sure how much I am* |

*up for a re-write - not 8 times for sure! There has to be another way out of this.*

*Rory* — *I feel for you – "re-writes" were incremental changes for different interested parties, but I got seriously depressed (as you are) at one point. There is another way - we choose the key products, start trading, and overcome each obstacle as it arises! I don't suppose Hewlett and Packard went through all this shit when they started engineering products in their garage!*

*Poonam* — *I am not sure if great minds think alike or fools seldom differ. I was thinking also along similar lines. Here are my thoughts….*

*Rory* — *Sounds very practical. You go lock yourself Down while I get up steam to re-write the final chapter of my book (groan.....)*

What comes across to me in these exchanges is not just the emotion that is evident, but the way it dissipates as solutions take shape. This is a process that repeats itself over and over in any relationship between two people who seek to achieve things together. In short, a trigger for powerful emotions is a perception that reality is getting further from, or coming closer to, our aspirations. The greater the change, the greater the emotion.

Below, an employee describes how Harry, a Managing Director, regarded the issue of emotion when speaking to potential managers:

*At this point he asked us to 'put away' the word motivation, and use the word **activation** instead. Managers could only create an environment in which people could activate these feelings - it was up to each of us to do the activating.*

For Harry, managers could not hope to motivate people directly, only create an environment in which their emotional desire to achieve is **activated**. It rested on triggering positive emotions in people. His company's vision statement – agreed by 60 members of staff - was to create an environment in which people felt "inspired, respected and appreciated". In short, his executive team aimed to run their business so that particular emotions were triggered. They did not always achieve this – and later we will consider some of the reasons why – but the goal was specific and had a high profile in recruitment, induction and management training.

**Karl Weick, the author of the above quote, describes happiness and sadness as emotions that are triggered by the unexpected satisfaction or disappointment of an expectation. If a person is not expecting to achieve something quickly, but events unfold in such a way to accelerate them towards a goal, then the body produces feelings of satisfaction and happiness.**

**Conversely, if we have an expectation that is disappointed, the body reacts in a different way to produce feelings of anger, sadness or frustration.**

**He argues that having goals that are achievable – preferably goals that also involve 'loved ones' - is the best strategy for achieving ongoing happiness. Avoiding challenges, on the other hand, might avoid sadness but will also never make someone happy.**

One eminent researcher, Karl Weick, described the process of sense-making as follows:

> *A key event for emotion is the interruption of an expectation. It makes good evolutionary sense to construct an organism that reacts significantly when the world is no longer the way it was…Once heightened arousal is perceived, it is appraised, and people try to construct some link between the present situation and 'relevant' prior situations to make sense of the arousal. Arousal leads people to search for an answer to the question 'What's up?'*[2]

Emotions, therefore, are not necessarily problematic for decision-making and decision-makers. They are reactions to change which alert us to strengths, weakness, threats and opportunities around us.

Consider yourself when you are out and about town, or in the shops, at the cinema or dancing with friends. What is it that catches your attention? Why did you look right rather than left, look up instead of down, speak instead of stay quiet, smile instead of frown, laugh instead of cry, cry instead of laugh? In each case, it is your emotions that alerted you to something taking place around you.

Why is it, however, that we sometimes appear to behave irrationally? There are two issues here. Firstly, what is irrational to one person may be sensible to others. One person may see possibilities and outcomes that others cannot see. Secondly, as Wilhelm Wundt discovered over a century ago, the mind is quite limited in what it can perceive at any one time. Typically a person can only process about half a dozen pieces of information at a time. More intelligent people might cope with eight or nine pieces of information.[3]

A situation may appear threatening because of the things we have not taken into account. Alternatively, a situation may look promising because we have not perceived the threats that are present. Either we make the decision based on what we know, or we defer the decision until we have more information. What guides us? Our emotions! They indicate to us the urgency of the situation and the speed with which we must make a decision.

While we cannot be certain that our emotions are always right or wrong, a fair amount of research indicates that people with good judgement rely on their emotions as much as any other source of knowledge, and that the outcomes of their decisions are no better, no worse than those who use calculative, mathematical and "rational" means to evaluate alternatives.[4] In considering why this is the case, let us consider how emotions are stored and the way they are formed.

## Emotional Knowledge

The best-selling author Daniel Goleman has popularised the concept of *emotional intelligence*. While the

applications of his work have been strongly criticised[5], it is important for describing how the brain's three centres of intelligence work together. Goleman's application of his own argument, however, is contradictory. In this section I will explore both the importance and limitations of his work.

Goleman describes how we process information received through our senses. For many years, brain scientists have distinguished between two parts of the brain. Firstly, there is the *limbic* brain – evolved over millions of years to handle our basic body functions, sexual instincts, and the acquisition of knowledge. Secondly, there is the *neocortex*, a more recently developed part of the brain that deals with so-called "rational" thought. Our capacity to make decisions, it was believed, was rooted in the thought processes taking place in the *neocortex*, while the limbic brain controlled instinctive responses. In crude terms, the *limbic* brain controls our animal behaviour while the *neocortex* controlled our refined behaviour.

Two major discoveries, one at the start of the twentieth century and the other at the end, have changed this understanding. The first was the work of Pavlov (and his famous dogs). The second is the neuroscience described by Goleman. Taken together they reveal how emotional intelligence is learnt through a combination of personal reflection and cultural experience.

Goleman describes the role of the *amygdala* – a place where emotional memories are stored in the brain. It is now known that information is passed to the *amygdala* **before** it is passed to the *neocortex*. It was also discovered that loss of access to the *amygdala* devastates our ability to make decisions. In other words, we "think" in two parts of the brain at the same time. We use both emotional memories and reflected experience to make decisions.

## Pavlov's Dogs

The significance of Pavlov's work is often misunderstood, but by explaining his findings with reference to Goleman's work, the impact of *cultural experiences* in

developing our emotions can be better appreciated. Pavlov conducted a series of experiments in which dogs were fed after ringing a bell.[6] Over time, the dogs got so used to being fed when they heard a bell that the ringing of the bell alone caused them to salivate in anticipation of receiving food.

The most common interpretation – and application – of Pavlov's work is in the field of behavioural conditioning. Child and management psychologists alike applied and developed Pavlov's work to create strategies for social control through reinforcing desired behaviour with rewards. The way that pay policy and perks are utilised to underpin human resource management (HRM) strategies goes back to the discovery that Pavlov's dogs could be conditioned to respond in particular ways *if they believed* they would be rewarded for it.

A deeper appreciation of Pavlov's work, however, leads to greater insights. Emotions are not "given" - they are learnt. Moreover, the emotions may appear in later life as "instincts" although originally they were not. The seminal importance of Pavlov's work, therefore, was to show that "instincts" are learned responses to repeated patterns of cause and effect. We internalise the patterns of cause and effect as 'knowledge' and begin to anticipate them.

**The Nobel Prize winning Herb Simons has been an important figure in developing our understanding of rational thinking. His argument, largely accepted today, is that people are only rational in relation to what they know.**

**In human terms, it means that we are only confident or afraid on the basis of what we take into consideration when making a decision. His work resulted in the concept of *bounded rationality* - that our decisions cannot ever be fully informed, and that the way we select and interpret information is critical in decision-making.**

This, however, is not the end of the story. In more recent research, we have started to unravel the human capacity to question our earlier understanding and responses. We can unlearn social programming to regain conscious choice over our lives.[7] Over time, we learn the social meaning of repeated attempts to control our behaviour and this diminishes the effectiveness of the reward approach to behaviour control. Control ultimately depends on the *meanings* that people assign to others attempts to control their behaviour.

People are not machines, and cannot be 'controlled' with cause-effect thinking.

The brain remembers the impact on our feelings when we have different experiences. Then, as new events unfold in a particular way, we anticipate the outcome and this triggers an emotional reaction (depending on how we feel about the potential outcome). Emotions, therefore, are not neutral or genetically inherited – they are deeply embedded in our personal and cultural experiences. They are learnt by storing up 'knowledge' of the way that situations have unfolded in the past to give us an idea of how situations are likely to unfold in the future. Based on past learning, our emotions guide us towards behaviours that we believe will bring about desirable outcomes.

In early life, the way we are rewarded and punished for different behaviours *constructs* our emotional intelligence and an "emotional dictionary".[8] These reside in the *amygdala*. They are recalled – together with knowledge stored in the *neocortex* – every time we sense something. They work together to guide us towards decisions that will promote our survival. As we mature, however, we become more sophisticated in understanding the way we have been 'programmed' by our past experience and this enables us – if we practice reflection – to regain and consider more choices.

Goleman's view of the *neocortex* as a "rational" brain, however, is problematic. While the *amygdala* stores personal responses to events, the *neocortex* is the place in which cultural knowledge is assembled and recalled for future use. Institutional knowledge – that acquired from books, newspapers, films and the media – is often full of prejudices, misinformation, inaccurate 'facts' and personal opinions.

These are processed through reflection and stored in the *neocortex* for future recall. Our feelings about these reflections are stored in the *amygdala*. While this expands the array of knowledge we can use to make decisions, it will be full of **both** "irrational" and "rational" information. Once it was common knowledge amongst scholars that the sun moved around the earth, that we did **not** evolve from apes, that if we took our clothes off our spirit would escape. All this "rational" knowledge was

worked out by people of the highest intellect and propagated via the cultural forms of their times.

The knowledge stored in the *amygdala* however, has all been validated by personal experience. It has to pass a higher standard of proof than the knowledge acquired through culture. Despite this, many people accord more credence to knowledge acquired from the media and books than from their own personal experience.

## The Three Key Areas of the Brain

To summarise, let me reiterate the import of these discoveries. Firstly, the brain can be seen as having *three* bodies of knowledge. The first is the *limbic* brain that controls our bodily functions and learning processes. It is credited as the part of the brain that controls genetically inherited unconscious behaviour. This part of the brain is largely beyond our comprehension, although scientists deduce its operation and function from the way the body behaves, and can now use brain scans to observe brain activity in real-time.

The second is the *neocortex,* a place where 'knowledge' is acquired through language and reflection. It is better to see this as the repository of *culturally acquired* knowledge, rather than rational thought. The 'knowledge' in the *neocortex* may be inaccurate or accurate, mislead us or guide us towards truth. It is our 'common sense', but only the sense that is common to us, not that learned by other people.

Lastly, there is the *amygdala*, a place where emotional knowledge is acquired through personal experiences and we record the impacts on our emotional well-being. From this place, we recall and project the likely emotional impact of different choices to guide us towards safety and pleasure in everyday life.

Do you have a special skill such as playing the piano, juggling or writing poetry? If not, think of learning to drive or swim. Think back to how you felt when you started. Were you all fingers and thumbs and did your hand not move when the leg did? Gradually, what feels completely unnatural starts to feel natural. Eventually, it becomes second-nature, as if the behaviour is instinctive. Even after a gap of many years, we can still make instant use of the skills we acquired in early life.

This process occurs repeatedly in the first few years of life - before we are aware we are doing it. It applies to the way we think as well as the physical skills we learn. The *capacity to learn* is an instinct, but much of *what we learn* is culturally determined – even if later in life it feels like "common sense" or an instinct. Importantly, culturally acquired knowledge can be unlearnt and relearnt. Emotions, and reactions, change as our lives develop.

## Stories of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman recounts many stories. I will use two of them to show the possibilities and limitations of his work. In the first instance, he attempts to show that our emotions can be irrational because "we confront dilemmas with an emotional repertoire tailored to the urgencies of the Pleistocene"[9].

To illustrate this he tells the story of Matilda Crabtree who was shot by her father, Bobby, when she played a practical joke. Goleman argues that:

> *Fear primed Crabtree to shoot before he could fully register what he was shooting at, even before he could recognize his daughter's voice. Automatic reactions of this sort have become etched in our nervous system, evolutionary biologists presume, because for a long and crucial period in human prehistory they made the difference between survival and death.*[10]

Goleman suggests that the actions of Bobby Crabtree was a response to "our distant ancestral past". However, the details of the story – and an appreciation of the way modern culture affects our judgement - do not bear this out.

Bobby Crabtree had been out with his wife visiting friends. They thought their fourteen-year-old daughter, Matilda, was also staying over at friends, so when they entered the house at 1am in the morning and heard noises, Bobby believed there was an intruder. He fetched his gun and searched the house. As he entered Matilda's room, she jumped out of a closet in which she had been hiding and yelled "Boo!" Bobby, thinking that he was being attacked, shot her dead.

From a holistic perspective, it might be argued that this behaviour was irrational. But from the perspective of Bobby, who had ruled out the possibility of his daughter being at home (a rational deduction), he assumed that hearing noises in his home was likely to indicate a burglary was in progress. To him, therefore, his reactions were the "difference between survival and death" - just as they used to be millions of years earlier.

His deductions – the result of a *modern* thinking process – are deeply rooted in cultural knowledge. From where did he learn that this configuration of events was likely to be a burglary? Bobby's thinking was influenced by films, books, newspapers and the mass media (and maybe from personal experience). It was not unreasonable for Bobby to presume, on the basis of the information known to him, that someone hostile was in his house.

Further, his acquisition of a gun to defend himself is the result of cultural norms rooted in the constitutional provisions in the United States (US). In the US, a person has a constitutional right to bear arms and defend their property. In the United Kingdom (UK), such behaviour would be culturally illegitimate and illegal. Consider the case of Tony Martin, the farmer who shot a burglar and was sent to prison for doing so. While his case generated considerable popular debate, the law regarding self-defence remains that shooting a burglar (in the UK) is an unreasonable use of force.[11]

Given the cultural and emotional knowledge he had acquired living in the United States, Bobby Crabtree's *emotional* responses can be regarded as rational, rather than irrational. But if his cultural knowledge had been acquired in the UK (or any community where burglaries never occur within a society where guns in the home are considered illegal), his emotional responses would not just seem irrational, they would probably be regarded as insane.

The other Goleman story I recount here is equally revealing and illustrates the dual effect of recalling emotional and experiential memories together. He discusses the case of Elliot, a highly intelligent and successful corporate lawyer, who had a tumour just below his forehead. After the tumour was removed, he retained all his mental faculties and could still perform just as well on any intellectual challenge put to him. His problem, however, was that he could not make any decisions. Goleman recounts the problems that Elliot had organising meetings:

> *The handicap showed up even in mundane decisions. When Damasio [his doctor] tried to choose a time and date for the next appointment with Elliot, the result was a muddle of indecisiveness: Elliot could find arguments for and against every date and time that Damasio proposed, but could not choose amongst them…Elliot lacked any sense of how he* ***felt*** *about any of the times. Lacking that awareness of his own feelings, he had no preferences at all.*[12]

Emotional awareness is part of our intelligence because it provides us with information about how we felt about past decisions. It is our feelings that we use as a yardstick – feelings acquired by making decisions – that tell us whether something is likely to help or hinder in the future. Elliot's operation had severed access to the information stored in his *amygdala*. He could no longer access the emotional memories that previously informed his decision-making and he had to learn them all over again.

Can you think of a time when you felt passionately about something? How did you know you were right? What knowledge were you drawing on? Where did that knowledge come from? Which person? Which books? Did you learn it from television? Was it fact (a true story) or fiction (an illustrative story)? How are you sure that the knowledge you used was correct? Did you test it out personally or take it on trust? Do you ever do anything before you accept knowledge as reliable? How do you decide which amongst many propositions are reliable and truthful?

## Some Personal Stories

The way that we learn emotions – and the contexts in which they are useful to us - can be illustrated from experience of parenting. My baby daughters were able to sleep through the most intrusive and disruptive noises. I was so amazed by this that I once placed our daughter next to a particularly noisy alarm clock during an afternoon snooze. Just as I had expected – but contrary to common sense – I woke immediately when the alarm went off, but she slept straight through without batting an eye-lid.

I have puzzled about why I wake up, but my daughters do not. Even now my daughters are 8 and 12 years old, they seldom awake and get up when an alarm goes off. The pattern – in our house at least – is that they wake up when they wake up, or they wake up when mummy or daddy wakes them. The only thing that makes sense is that an alarm means something different to me than to my daughters – my emotional reactions to an alarm sound are different.

The way we assemble meaning and link it to emotion is complex, but a simple story about my baby daughter will help. In one incident, my daughter Natasha, then aged about 13 months, climbed over barriers erected to keep her away from a Christmas tree. Such barriers were common in our house because she explored everything – we even had to barricade the TV because she liked to put slices of toast inside the video recorder! On this occasion,

however, she managed to surmount the barrier, remove a bauble and start to eat it. The moment the bauble shattered in her mouth, she started to cry, and then started to vomit. Without a moment's hesitation, I rushed to the phone and called an ambulance.

My daughter, Natasha, had not learnt to fear what she was doing. Her lack of fear, and desire to learn, was complimented by my own, and Caroline's, awareness of the danger she was in. Our emotions saved her because her own emotions were not yet sufficiently developed. As time passed, however, she acquired a fear of things that would hurt her (often from books, conversations with people, films etc.). As a result, she gradually got better and better at looking after herself.

Fear is an acquired emotion. We not only learn to fear, but what to fear, and how to overcome fear. Children often develop fears then grow out of them. My youngest, Bethany, started to have tantrums around the age of 18 months whenever we entered a car wash. For a while, I had to park the car in the wash, then get out and go back to press the start button so she could watch. As she developed understanding, her fear subsided. Eventually, she grew to enjoy what she earlier had feared.

## Emotional Defence and Emotion Management

It is a common strategy to attribute blame to others as a method of self-defence. Not only legal systems, but also many management systems, are constructed in such a way that we decide on the rights and wrongs of a situation, then allocate blame rather than work to understand and rebuild damaged relationships. We react to, rather than understand and overcome, our fears. Whether it is the process of prosecuting an employee or employer, blaming a manager or employee for poor performance, sacking people or getting them sacked, social control is characterised by the allocation of blame.

The way blame and emotional defence is linked is illustrated by a story from Custom Products. Irene was a generously proportioned member of staff who wore glasses. Although she worked hard, she became isolated

amongst the workforce. After 7 years of employment, Irene was withdrawn and not attending social events organised by the company.

Irene argued that the company should not force her to socialise with work colleagues. She felt isolated and did not wish to be with them outside work. John, one of the company directors, argued that she dug herself into a hole by upsetting her colleagues with her behaviour. He also argued that non-attendance would set a bad example that others might follow. This would damage the "community" culture the organisation was trying to develop.

Irene broke tacit and explicit social rules and was blamed for the conflict she created. Another perspective, however, is that the rules themselves were the source of the conflict because of the unreasonable expectations they placed on Irene. Without the rules, the conflict would not have occurred. In this case, the rules could not accommodate Irene's discomfort within her peer group. From John's point of view, rule enforcement – to ensure full participation - was more important than the specifics of Irene's situation.

In the blame game that followed, let us consider some of the emotions that were aroused. In the passage below, Diane – an human resources manager attending a directors' meeting to advise on the situation - recalls discussion amongst senior staff:

> *I was sitting in the directors' meeting and they were all talking about Irene. I felt John was not properly representing her, so I spoke up. It took a lot of courage to do that, but the directors just started laughing and saying that I did not understand.*

The directors did not take Irene's views – or Diane's protestations – seriously. In short, Irene's views were considered laughable. But in another context, John displays different emotions.

> *Harry and John raised the Irene issue and clearly it pained them to exclude her - this appeared to be a big issue, not just within the company, but also in terms of the wider issues of exclusion in society generally. John said that even*

*at the last minute, Irene's manager told her not to be too proud to come back if she could not get a job. All they need from her is a commitment to socialise with colleagues and attend the first part of the presentation evening (the awards). John seemed genuinely torn about what they have done in the name of upholding values. I think there has been considerable soul-searching going on.*

The emotional reactions in the first instance ("laughing") were directed towards Diane, a human resources officer. In the second instance, the emotional reactions ("soul searching", "pain") were directed towards myself and three other researchers working on a project to investigate their company culture. This kind of emotion management utilising expressions of sincerity or contempt to influence impressions were central in the works of Erving Goffman. Not only did he find that people constantly manage the way they impress others, but also that the context substantially impacts on the emotions displayed.[13]

This example shows not only how emotions are influenced by context and culture, and how consciously – or perhaps unconsciously – we use them to manage impressions in the presence of different people. Our emotions, furthermore, are selected on the basis of impressions we wish to give (i.e. to influence the opinions of the people who are with us). These "performances" – as Goffman called them - are often polished and convincing. We develop an capacity to 'speak' emotions as fluently as our native tongue.

## Emotion, Blame and Social Status

A slightly different take on emotion is found in the work of Stephen Fineman[14]. In his work, emotion is still linked to expectations, but the orientation is not linked so much to our individual goals and aspirations as our status within the various social groups we belong to.

In gathering stories about emotion at work, researchers found that people talk less about themselves and their goals than their relationships with others.[15]

Irene's unhappiness – and the relative power of Irene and John - can be understood by the level of acceptance and tolerance shown towards them by other social groups. Managers claimed they wanted to help Irene to "reintegrate", but by seeing her as the source of the problem (rather than the way she was seen by group members) they communicate to Irene her changing status within the company, the views of her peer group, and the company's intentions.

The impact of a changed perspective is illustrated by considering modern treatments for drug addicts that involve the addict's family and friends. In these treatments, the family and friends of the addict are counselled, rather than the addict. By challenging the way family members and friends see (and blame) the addict, they start to change the way they behave. As the group members' behaviour changes, so does that of the addict, aiding their recovery.[16] Using an approach similar to this, Irene's "reintegration" might have been achieved by addressing the way Irene's colleagues view her, rather than by trying to control her choices.

Blame, therefore, is a complex phenomenon. It may be more than an emotional defence mechanism. It lowers the social standing of an opponent amongst a population of people. It can be seen as an attempt to raise the social status of the accuser within the same group. Blame is a way of showing differences between oneself and another – an offensive, rather than defensive, strategy to win support through rhetorical expressions of emotions (such as confidence, sadness, distress or anger).

In may be, therefore, that Irene's exclusion was the end result of a process by which some people sought to prove themselves within the directors group as capable of being "tough" or take "hard decisions" as proof of their commitment to "upholding the culture". Irene's resistance can also be seen in this light, as a person seeking to prove to others (or herself) that she will not be "pushed around" or "intimidated" by managers.

Think of a person you dislike. What did they do to make you dislike them? Did they physically hurt you? Did they ignore you? How did they make you feel bad? Now think of someone who dislikes you? What did you do to make them dislike you? How did you make them feel bad?

How did your colleagues (or friends) react? Did the conflict affect your standing amongst your friends or colleagues? With hindsight, was there anyone you were trying to impress or distress?

## Emotion and Perception

The impact of emotions on accurate perception has been studied extensively. There is a wide range of social situations that influence what we *report* to others, and it has been found repeatedly that what we report is not always accurate. Whether these inaccuracies are due to a failure of perception, however, is not completely clear. In many cases, people report inaccuracies for social reasons – their perception is fine, but they still fail to tell the truth.

Two famous studies, the Milgram shock experiments[17] and the Asch line experiments[18] shook the scientific world when they revealed the extent to which people conform to social pressure. In the Milgram experiments it was found that research participants were prepared – in extraordinary numbers – to follow a researcher's instruction to apply severe electric shocks to confederates* who made mistakes during tests. In the Asch tests, participants were shown pairs of lines and asked to say whether they were the same or of a different length. Many participants were reluctant to follow their

* Confederates are people who work with a researcher covertly as part of an experiment. They are not participants because they understand the purpose of the experiment, its design, and the role they have in deliberately deceiving the participant to investigate their reactions. In the Milgram experiments, the confederates *pretended* to experience electric shocks – they were not actually subject to shocking. Experimental designs that involve deliberate deception are often regarded as unethical by today's standards.

own judgement when faced with a group of confederates who disagreed with them.

These experiments were influential in establishing the subject of social psychology and triggered thousands of studies into group behaviour in the 1970s/1980s. They are discussed in virtually every psychology and social psychology text book (as well as many other popular books).

There are two aspects of the experiments, however, that need clarification. Firstly, the impression given by some commentators is that everyone conforms to social influence. This was far from true - some discussions give details of the emotional impact of *truth telling* and how participants who told the truth were particularly stressed (but did so anyway). The experiments are usually discussed from the perspective of what makes us lie, rather than the perspective of what makes us tell the truth.

What is clear from descriptions of the experiments is that truth telling – when contradicting other people – is a highly emotional experience and this provides insights into why people lie.[19] If, in their own opinion, the lie told will have little impact on their own or others' status, it is easier to justify. Those who conformed did so, in all likelihood, because they evaluated that the falsehood was not important. Alternatively, they lied *to reduce the emotion they would feel from truth telling*.

The other aspect that is ignored derives from a weakness in the design of the experiments. In choosing participants randomly, and confederates who do not know the participants, the participants and confederates have no (or few) emotional bonds. This is quite different from normal life where we *do* have emotional bonds with those whom we live and work. What results would the Milgram experiments have obtained if people were shocking their work colleagues, or friends, or family members? Would the participants' be more willing to disagree about the length of the lines amongst friends and family? The experiments, therefore, only provide 'knowledge' about how we behave towards people we do not care about – not a particularly good basis from which

to generalise about human behaviour as we spend most of our time with people with know.

The conclusion drawn from these and similar experiments is that our perception is unreliable when in the grip of emotion. What is more accurate to assert, however, is that we are selective about the truths we tell depending on our assessment of a situation (i.e. the meaning it has for us). Our perception may be accurate, but we alter what we say in the light of the situation.

When truth telling involves contradicting others we may alter what we say to reduce the emotion we feel. From Fineman's (or Goffman's) perspective, these alterations are choices that manage others' impression of us and control our status within the group. Our choice depends on a quick assessment of how important it is to tell the truth and what self-image we want to project. Cognitive psychologists, however, might argue that there is an error in our perception.

Can you think of a time when you disagreed with a group of people? Were they friends, acquaintances or strangers? Could you voice your disagreement? Can you disagree with members of your family? Which ones? How was it at school? How did you feel asking the teacher a question in front of a whole class?

## Emotion and Sense-Making

Karl Weick points out two other problems with emotion during investigations and decision-making. Firstly, if we cannot find a plausible explanation that maintains a good self-image, we progressively substitute *less plausible* explanations until we find one that maintains a positive self-image. This might result in adopting a prejudiced attitude to justify hurting someone else. This is particularly common in war situations when the enemy is demonised to justify bombing them. It is, in my experience, also common in the workplace to justify the termination of contracts.

The second problem is that our emotional memories may lead us to compare a current situation with a past

situation that had a similar *emotional* impact, but is quite different in other respects. If we recall dissimilar situations to make sense of the current situation – simply because the emotional memories are similar – we may misinterpret the current situation. Poor judgement is the result.

A third problem that I identified in my own research – one that can also be a benefit – is that emotion causes us to *focus* attention. In some situations, solving a mystery perhaps, emotion drives us towards an explanation that is otherwise difficult to find. The desire to understand can be positive (if a hunch is correct) or negative (if the hunch is incorrect).

Consider Helen Mirren in her groundbreaking role as Inspector Tennyson (the "Prime Suspect" TV dramas).[20] Her desire to establish herself in her career, combined with a powerful desire to *convict* (not just arrest) a brutal killer, sustained her through weeks of a difficult investigation. It cost her a great deal in personal relationship terms (her boyfriend left her) but her emotional commitment to "nailing" George Marlow helped to establish with precision the exact modus operandi of a highly intelligent killer. As a result she was able to account for all the available evidence and break his alibi.

We might contrast this fictional case with the real-life case of Sion Jenkins. In this case, the accused was found to have lied on his CV and the investigators took this as an indication that he might be lying over the death of his daughter. Their suspicions seemed to be confirmed – despite a wealth of evidence that suggested he may not be guilty – when microscopic drops of blood and bone were found on his jacket. This evidence was later found to be unreliable and the conviction was quashed. After two retrials, in which the jury could not agree on guilt/innocence, Jenkins was found 'not guilty' (on the instruction of the judge). In this case, the police had to contemplate that their hunch – triggered by the emotive reaction to the death of a young girl – led to a miscarriage of justice.[21]

The stronger our emotions, the more we have a propensity to narrow down the focus of enquiry *to end the*

*emotional turmoil created by contradictions.* The fictional Prime Suspect case had few contradictions (only the suspect's evidence supported by his spouse contradicted other evidence). The real life case involving Sion Jenkins had an extraordinary number of contradictions, so the investigators elevated the status of small pieces of evidence (microscopic drops of blood) to reassure themselves that their case was strong.

If focus is narrowed incorrectly, a miscarriage of justice can occur. It was this process – reliance on a single piece of flawed scientific evidence – that occurred in the Guildford Four trial.[22] As I mentioned in the introduction, the bias in 'science' lies not in the process or the accuracy of the observation, but in the purposes of those observations and the way they are interpreted and reported. When focus is directed onto an innocent party who 'looks guilty', inconsistencies get ignored and the truth may be lost.

The best investigator and decision-maker, therefore, is someone who does not suppress their emotions (or try to suppress others emotions). The best investigator is someone who will allow their emotions to drive the search for a credible explanation *and who will continue to listen to their emotions as evidence is considered and accounted for.*

Lillian Glass, an expert on modes of communication, argues that most people ignore vast amounts of information in order to hold onto a particular way of thinking.[23] Why? Changing our thinking is deeply emotional, even painful. Ignoring information allows us to avoid pain. Emotional maturity, on the other hand, can be defined as the ability to cope with, listen to, emotional pain as a source of knowledge.

## Emotional Sensitivity and Performance

Emotional sensitivity, therefore, while painful is also a quality of those with a gift for insight. In artists, this translates into better "performances". In entrepreneurs and managers, it manifests itself in seeing market opportunities or ways of working smarter (rather than

harder). In consultants and researchers, it manifests itself in theories that stand the test of time and scrutiny. Emotional maturity – the ability to understand and use our emotions productively - increases the chance that credible information or explanations will be considered even if discordant with existing ideas, value systems and social norms.

The danger, as I see it, of increasing "professionalism" in management (and indeed, any sphere of life) is that it seeks to suppress or reduce emotion by attempting to create a straight jacket regarding which knowledge is right and wrong. What may start as a useful set of guidelines may later be treated as rules that must be enforced leading to the imposition of ideas and values on those who disagree with them. This approach degrades both the quality of knowledge, as well as our ability to exercise free will and moral judgement.

An alternative way to conceptualise "professionalism" is the acceptance of diversity, tolerance and critical self-reflection. These are part of a continual quest to understand complex inter-relationships that trigger behaviours. Emotion is a resource, a source of knowledge, not a sign that someone (else) is "losing the plot", or being a "whinger", "deviant", "oppressor", "harasser" or one of the other many terms we use to degrade each other in 'civilised' society!

## Summary

The way that we value emotions depends on the way that we understand their purpose and usefulness. In this chapter, there are a series of assumptions that I will now summarise and put to you as propositions for the rest of the book.

- The ability to feel sensations is genetically inherited, but emotions are not.
- Emotions develop as we come to understand the world about us, and are learnt and relearnt throughout our life.
- Our desires develop as we acquire 'knowledge' of what is (and is not) pleasurable.

- Emotions are rooted in our cultural experiences, constituted from cultural knowledge about what courses of action are likely to lead to pain and/or pleasure.
- Emotions can occur in reaction to changes in our relationships, particularly those that affect our status within social groups we value.
- Emotions can be spontaneous expressions of feeling (a reaction to change).
- Emotions can be deliberate expressions of feeling to assist us in managing our relationships with others.
- Suppressing emotions leads to poor decision-making.

Businesses depend not only on being able to calculate how to make a profit, or achieve a task, but also on satisfying the emotional and material needs of customers, suppliers, employees and investors so that they will continue to "do business". Few people want to do business with those who make them feel worthless or afraid.

In the next chapter, therefore, I examine how relationships develop. What is it that makes us feel valued or to value others?

## Notes on Chapter 2

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2 Weick, K. (1995) *Sense-Making in Organisations,* Sage, p. 46

3 Wundt, W. (1897) *Outlines of Psychology*, (Trans. C. H. Judd) Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann.

4 Agor, W. H. (ed.) (1989) *Intuition in Organizations*, Newbury Park, Sage Publications. Other sources provided in a well regarded text book on organisation behaviour by Stephen Robbins include: Behling, O., Eckel, N. L. (1991) "Making Sense Out of Intuition", *Academy of Management Executive,* February 1991, pp. 46-47; Klein, G. (1998) *Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

5 Notably in the introduction to Fineman, S (ed.) (2000) *Emotion in Organizations*, 2nd Edition, Sage Publications. See also a critical evaluation of Goleman's philosophical assumptions in Wilson, F. (2004) *Organizational Behaviour and Work* (2nd Edition), Oxford University Press.

6 Pavlov, I. P. (1902) *The Work of the Digestive Glands*, London, Charles Griffin, translated by W. H. Thompson. For a more readable discussion see Miller, G. (1962), *Psychology: The Science of Mental Life,* London: Penguin Books.

7 Berne, E. (1964) *Games People Play,* Penguin. Berne discusses this capacity in the closing chapters of his book when considering the ability of humans to rediscover their capacity for spontaneity (behaviour normally associated with learning in early childhood). For further discussion of our ability to unravel cultural knowledge, see Holland, R. (1999), "Reflexivity", *Human Relations*, 52(4), Tavistock Institute. Goleman tackles similar ground in *Emotional Intelligence*, Chapter 13.

8 Hochschild, A. R. (1998) "Sociology of emotion as a way of seeing" in G. Bendelow and S. J. Williams (eds) *Emotions in Social Life,* London: Routledge, p. 7.

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# Chapter 3 - Friendship and Flirting

## Introduction

George Burns once famously said:

> *There will always be a battle of the sexes because men and women want different things. Men want women, and women want men.*

Let's have some fun with this idea and explode a few myths.

**Myth:** Men are more interested in sex than women.

**Science:** Men and women are as interested in sex as each other[1].

**Myth:** Men initiate nearly all sexual encounters.

**Science:** Women initiate between 65% and 90% of sexual encounters[2].

**Myth:** Men are afraid of commitment.

**Science:** "Commitment" has different meanings, and different consequences, for men and women[3].

**Myth:** Men are always "up for it".

**Science:** 94% of men and 98% of women report "unwanted sexual attention"; 63% of men and 46% of women report "unwanted sexual intercourse"[4].

Betty Friedan, one of the founders of the modern women's movement in the United States, reviewed women's growing sexual appetite prior to the 1960s. She claims that from the 1950s onwards, it outstripped men's[5]. The most compelling contemporary evidence is

that 98% of romance novels are read by women, and this constitutes 40% of the market for paperback books. Furthermore, most romance novels are now based on stories about the workplace in which a man (or men) overpower a woman who resists.[6] While romance novels cover a wide range of books (not all contain explicit sex), they are always about the sexual chemistry that occurs between men and women.

Consider this carefully for a moment. If nearly 40% of all the paperbacks read are female fantasies about romance at work, how is this impacting on workplace relationships between women and men? And if the single most popular story line in women's romance novels is identical to the legal definition of sexual harassment, what are the implications for managing the "problem" of harassment at work? While there is a difference between having and acting out a fantasy, having fantasies about work colleagues changes our body language when we are with them. When body language impacts on work colleagues' perceptions (whether intentional or not) a person's workplace fantasies starts to affect their colleagues' workplace reality.

Another way to gauge men's and women's interest in each other is dating sites on the internet and personal ads in newspapers. While more men register on-line (60% men, 40% women), personal ads in newspapers are consistently the reverse (around 60% women, 40% men)[7]. Each places more adverts in the place they most frequently 'visit'. Taken together, however, it shows that men and women seek each other in roughly equal numbers.

On adult sites specifically designed for people to find casual sex, however, men outnumber women by 20:1. Does this prove that men are more interested in sex than women? No. It simply shows that women want sex "with strings" while men want sex "without strings". As Warren Farrell wrote in the late 1980s:

> *Women are still taught to be sexually cautious until two, three, or all four conditions – attraction, respect, emotions, and intellect – are met. Many women add fifth and sixth conditions: singleness and status/success. And many add a*

> *seventh, eighth, and ninth: the man must ask her out; he must pay; and he must risk rejection by initiating the first kiss. Men are socialized to want sex as long as only **one** condition is fulfilled – physical attraction.*[8]

Subsequent research confirms that this is still the case.[9]

A few years ago, Robert Winston referred to a study during the BBC television series *Human Instinct* to suggest that men are much more interested in sex than women[10]. Based on a simple test, he claimed that 75% of men, but almost no women, responded positively to a sexual approach by an attractive member of the opposite sex. He pointed out that fewer men responded positively for an invitation to have a coffee than an invitation to have sex. He then used these findings to suggest that men were "instinctively" more interested in sex. There are two problems with his assertions. Firstly, they ignore cultural norms regarding non-verbal/verbal initiation in relationships; secondly, the study actually showed that men and women were equally interested in sexual relationships, but differed over the time they would wait before suggesting sex.

Let us consider cultural norms first. Men are almost never propositioned by a woman verbally (unless she is *selling* sex, in which case men are propositioned all the time by other means[11]). So if an attractive woman verbally offers sex without payment, it is an extremely rare opportunity. That is probably why 75% of the male respondents said 'yes'. Being offered coffee, however, is more common so saying 'no' simply reflects supply/demand dynamics of the situation. Women, on the other hand, are verbally propositioned more frequently. As one of my woman friends used to joke, "if I put a picture of a can of baked beans on my internet page, I would probably still get propositioned!" Saying 'no' does little to diminish her chances of finding a sexual partner so women prefer to check out a man first to see what else is on offer and this explains why few female respondents quickly said 'yes'.

To get a feel for this, it might be interesting to do a survey to see how willingly university age men and women would accept the offer of a ride in a Porsche to eat in an expensive restaurant when the car is driven by an unattractive looking 40-year-old member of the opposite sex ...

Interestingly, Robert Winston fails to mention one of the most important findings in the original study[12]. An *equal* number of men and women responded positively to the offer of a date (50%). The differences emphasised in the popular media ignored the findings regarding long-term sexual relationships and focussed on casual sex. It tells us more about who has power in sexual matters than who is more interested in sex.

Another way to consider this question is why do women impose preconditions when their interest in sex is as great as a man's? The answer is that women are taught, most often by other women, that sex is a source of considerable power[13]. As Nancy Friday found, men and women both fantasise by a ratio of 4:1 that the other sex will take the lead in a romantic encounter (i.e. be the first to risk rejection). The cultural arrangement that men should make the first *public* declaration of interest is an indicator of where power really lies. Where does it lie?

Women get their wish three-quarters of the time; men get their wish one-quarter of the time (and only then, if the man actually prefers to take the lead and risk rejection). As men usually have to play their hand first, power over courtship passes mainly to the woman who can accept or reject the man. Men do exercise this choice, but much more rarely. As a result, the issue of how women use this power is one of the topics discussed throughout this book.

With this 'balance of power' in mind, let us consider stories of fun, friendship and flirting in the workplace. As will be illustrated, the view that "flirting always leads to trouble" is not born out by research or personal experience. Different studies claim that between 40-70% of people find their partner in a workplace setting so clearly many people flirt successfully at work[14]. In one

recent study, 40% of married women claimed they had changed jobs to increase their chances of finding a husband. The workplace, therefore, remains a primary 'hunting ground' for husbands, despite the fall in the numbers of men and women getting married[15]. In only 10% of cases does flirting lead to serious problems for the parties involved, and only 20% of people in an international survey reported that others' close relationships caused them problems at work[16].

In this chapter, we will look at seduction success stories, how friendship can be built through fun, and how sometimes this evolves into flirting and a relationship. After this, I will discuss a much misunderstood aspect of seduction – its roots in equality – and how these techniques can be observed in same-sex relationships, or during sales, marketing, recruitment, induction and socialisation.

## What is Seduction?

Come with me on a journey with Ben, Hayley and Diane and see the groundwork that they lay before Hayley and Ben develop a flirty relationship in the workplace. The following interview and journal notes were made during an anthropological study of a medium sized company. The principal benefit of this approach (over retrospective interviews and stories) is the insights that can be derived from observing events as they unfold. Only Ben gave information about the development of the relationship, but it is still useful and interesting (and quite rare) to see how relationships develop from a man's point of view.

When Ben first met Hayley, he was not particularly impressed by her:

*Met Hayley. She was pleasant, but a smoker (!). This morning I went through inputting stuff with her - I think she is overawed. It was nice to get to know her a bit but she's very young. She looked exhausted. She says she gets up at 5.30am and gets home at 8.30 at night. We had a good chat in the afternoon; I talked a little bit about my work. I think she finds it a strange place, but is now working on the*

*training awards and that motivated her a bit. Very pleasant, accommodating, she likes to work - but....how can I put this....born with a silver spoon in her mouth (I don't wish to be unkind). Her dad runs a business, mum's a lawyer. She travels a long way - you don't do that without someone putting money in your pocket.*

First impressions, however much psychologists suggest we rely on them, **do** change. As Ben later admitted:

*This initial impression was not particularly accurate as she'd held a Saturday job for years, and worked full time for considerable periods. She proved to be confident and resourceful, so this initial impression was probably because she was uneasy about what she'd learnt in her first week.*

**The idea that first impressions count is a half-truth. First impressions matter in that we quickly evaluate a person on the basis of their dress sense, looks, talk and status (as they appear to us in that moment).**

**When we say later that we realised there was something special about the person straightaway, it is true in most cases - but the same is true of any person we willingly keep as a friend.**

**John Molloy, to his surprise, found that many women – like Ben – disliked, or were unimpressed, with their spouse when they first met them. It turns out that the people who *most* attract us are those who change our mind the most, *after* we have established a first impression. Social psychologists agree – the amount of change as we get to know a person is more important than first impressions.**

Ben and Hayley's line manager was called Diane. During first impressions, members of a group exchange information about their life, where they live, their family, upbringing and aspirations. After a short while, however, Ben reports that his conversations with Hayley and Diane changed to 'story swapping'.

*Hayley and myself have things to do, but we have chats too. In the morning Hayley told us about having a flat tyre and someone stopping to change it. Then Diane told a story about the police who once pulled her over because she had a flat tyre, but instead of taking her to task they changed the tyre for her! I said that was funny because I'd read a book which starts with a story about a woman who broke down with a flat tyre and does*

*not even try to change it. Instead she waits for a man to go past – who promptly stops and changes it for her. A few weeks later this happened for real when I was driving home with my girlfriend. I stood for 20 minutes trying to flag down a car but none stopped so we changed places. The women still drove straight past, but the first man that came along stopped!*

These 'non-risqué' stories then get replaced by stories about love lives. A week or two later, Ben, Hayley and Diane were telling much more personal stories:

*Hayley and I got stuck back into the due diligence report. The highlight was a relaxed friendly discussion between Hayley, Ben and Diane. They talked about soaps, and the music and programmes they liked. Diane then told us that her husband had a fit body, that was why she'd stayed with him so long, in all other respects she felt they were quite different. Hayley gave Ben and Diane the story of her romance with her boyfriend - that they were friends for a couple of years - then a friend told her that he loved her. The long and short is that apart from playing the normal games, they started going out together. Diane then told us her husband is her second husband - she fell in love with her next door neighbour because they spent a lot of time together. Diane left her husband and married her neighbour – after she left, she felt guilty for a year and cried a lot. She said the "romance" in her second marriage is now non-existent but she still fancies her present husband.*

After these conversations, the character of the interactions between Hayley and Ben started to change. As Ben reported:

*I think Hayley quite likes me - I don't want to misread anything - but she seems particularly upbeat when I see her. When I left yesterday she said "Oh Ben! What am I going to do without you?" I didn't think much at the time, but it is her reaction today that makes me think she likes me coming in; she likes me helping her. She seems a good deal....a good deal happier...that is the main point.*

Ben also reports that they started to pay each other compliments:

*We are becoming friendly in the way that work colleagues do. When I came in this morning, I could see she'd had her hair done, and had her pullover over her shoulder and looked quite swish so I did compliment her. I could see she appreciated that.*

As body language writers note, women tend to communicate in non-verbal ways (clothing, make-up, courtship signals[17]). Women have 13 identifiable courtship signals associated with body movements and dress-sense, whereas men only have two! Before a couple settle into equitable relationships based on chat and touch, there is a oft-repeated pattern of non-verbal behaviour on the part of the woman that prompts verbal behaviour on the part of the man.

Even after the above exchanges, when I interviewed Ben about his developing relationships at work, he did not mention Hayley amongst his 'friends' – instead he talked about John, Harry, Diane and Carol. This however, changed, when the situation in Iraq deteriorated and Hayley became concerned for relatives who were working in the area. When troops invaded Iraq, the Iranian army was ordered to the country's border to thwart a possible invasion by the United States. Her relatives wrote claiming US jet fighters were invading Iranian airspace and attacking border posts. Hayley's family were worried over the safety of family members still in Iran.

As Hayley became concerned for her relatives, Ben became concerned for Hayley.

*I feel quite chummy with Hayley and she with me. She's coming out of herself quite a bit. We wished each other a good weekend. It is her birthday next week. I promised that I would get a cake - I'll have to come in early to get it. I felt really touched today. Hayley has decided to leave work and she said "Ben, I'm going to miss you." I said I would miss her too. We agreed to swap email addresses. I would like to stay in touch with her because she is an extraordinarily open and kind woman.*

The developing relationship between Hayley and Ben, however, worried (or annoyed) a woman called Brenda. Hayley invited Ben to the pub after work, but Brenda objected that Ben still had to work. Ben asked if he could make up the time on Monday, but Brenda expressed concern over a finance project. Only after Ben assured Brenda that he was ahead of schedule did she relent and permit him to work flexible hours. As flexitime was the norm, and not the exception at Custom Products, Hayley reacted strongly to Brenda's intervention:

> *Hayley said that she did not like the way that Brenda had reacted to Ben. Ben said that he thought it was right that Brenda checked he was completing his work, but Hayley launched into a whole series of things. She said she felt Brenda regarded her as low status, as not having skills. Hayley felt that Brenda did not help her enough and was always pausing when she talked, giving the impression that she was evaluating and judging.*

There is a question over the reason for Brenda's concern. Was she jealous or simply trying to get Ben and Hayley to keep their minds on their work? In checking with other managers, however, I found Ben was indeed ahead of schedule. Ben reported that he felt working with Hayley was making him more rather than less productive, while another manager confirmed that he had sent an email to Brenda expressing thanks for Ben's excellent work on a payroll system.

Ben spoke of the care he took in Hayley's company:

> *I'm cautious about being too friendly and getting too close or emotionally attached. It is easy to misunderstand and be too easily flattered. But there is a real rapport. We were joking about how she doesn't keep in contact with people. I was pulling her leg saying "oh, does that mean you won't write to me" and stuff like that because we promised to keep in touch.*

Later, however, Ben's 6 year relationship with his girlfriend deteriorated and he started to talk to Hayley about it.

*At lunch I talked with Hayley and opened up about what had happened - not massively - but enough to know what had happened at home. She was very kind. We amusingly talked about my need to get back into the dating game. I said that I thought I would wait a bit before I do that. I don't think this is all in the head but I get the feeling there is a sexual connection between myself and Hayley - not that I am going to act on it - but her concern is genuine. The way she talks, and the way we now banter with each other, does indicate to me that she rather likes me. To be fair, I think she is an attractive women too.*

*Why do I think that? Because of the way she was telling me that I "wouldn't be lonely" and that I would have "no trouble". I said that I got frustrated with the games men and women play, sometimes even when they don't know it. She looked at me knowingly and said "Oh yes, men and women know when they are playing games!" I particularly remember her eyes as she said this, they became very narrow and quite piercing. It was light and it was nice. I don't mind.*

In the above passage, Hayley starts to take verbal initiatives. While Ben likes the attention, he still refrains from acting on his feelings. Perhaps because of this, Hayley starts to get even bolder.

*Darling Hayley. She kept coming up and interrupting me from time to time. I'm sure she didn't need to, she just likes to. She was wearing a lovely black top today so I didn't mind being interrupted by her at all. We had lunch again, and again I felt - just like yesterday - that there was a bit of sexual banter going on. We were talking about the night out for her leaving do. She asked me if I would walk her back to her car - and she gave me such a look that I'm not sure what would happen if I did.*

*Hayley and I are now flirting quite openly. I hope I'm not overdoing it. I'm conscious that I might have enjoyed it too much today and got carried away. At one point she said "Ben, are you flirting with me?" I said "Yes, just a bit", then I said "I trust you'll tell me to stop if you don't like it". Then*

*she came straight over and stood very close to me in the corner and giggled in a girlish way.*

*In the afternoon I had coffee with Hayley. She started asking my feelings about children, did I want children in the future? I also asked her. In my head I'm asking myself "what is going on here?" These are the kind of questions that you start to ask someone when you might have a romantic relationship with them. We agreed to swap email and mobile numbers. She even jokingly - perhaps not so jokingly – suggested meeting each other at Alton Towers. We are enjoying ourselves immensely but I hope we are not being unprofessional in our work.*

Ben told me that their farewell was quite touching. They hugged three times before she departed and then their relationship continued by email.

*Hayley,*

*Thought it would be nice to surprise you with an email and give you my contact details. If you print this, take it with you and then email me from your hotmail address I'll respond to check we are communicating in both directions - then our beautiful friendship can continue to unfold!*

*P.S. Ever flirted by email?*

*---*

*Ben,*

*You are too naughty for words. My private email is hayleymatthews@hotmail.com.*

*You can text me on 08776 398128.*

*Hayley,*

*Too naughty? Is there such a thing? Actually, you are right - I try to be a gentleman, albeit one with a sense of fun. While I have got into an emotional pickle once or twice during my life, I believe strongly in monogamy and fidelity.*

*Enjoy a well earned rest, and I'll text you soon. Ben.*

What I find interesting is the equity and positive outcome that resulted. However, 10 months later, Brenda sought more detailed information from Diane about Ben's workplace relationships. Upon discovering a snippet of gossip, she took Ben into a room and told him he was behaving "immorally" and "unprofessionally". She kept him there for nearly an hour making Ben answer questions. His earlier caution, therefore, was wise, but the passage of time did not protect him. In the next chapter, we will consider the context in which this happened.

## Defining Seduction and Intimacy

Unlike the typical portrayal of seduction in Hollywood romantic films (in which men quickly save and sweep women off their feet) everyday life seduction is characterised by three things:

- Equity
- Reciprocity
- Caution

Ben and Hayley's friendship took 6 weeks to develop – that is extremely *quick*. Often, close relationships of this kind take much longer. As Hayley describes, it took 2 years before her friendship with her boyfriend was transformed into a sexual relationship that later led to marriage. My own 'friendship' with my wife lasted for more than 6 months before we started meeting regularly. By that time we were ready for greater intimacy and it took only a *few more weeks* of 'playing' before the relationship became physical. After two months of physical intimacy we started talking about marriage.

Diane – in describing the transition from her first marriage to her second one – described how 'friendship' developed over a period of a year, mostly having coffee together with her next door neighbour before she and he became self-aware of their feelings. She then withheld

physical intimacy until he agreed to marriage – for her it had to be "all or nothing".

Dictionary definitions of seduction often have a negative tone. In my dictionary, the word "seduce" is described as an attempt to "tempt or entice into sexual activity or wrongdoing" or to "coax or lead astray".[18] These negative connotations, however, are not born out by the above account. The outcome of seduction can be positive as well as negative, and the evaluation itself is purely subjective and depends on how a person reflects on the experience after the event (see Chapter 7).

A second problem with the dictionary definition is the nature of the behaviour that is actually seductive. Writers on seduction draw attention to the negative impacts of neediness – both men and women recoil from others if they sense that the person is, or wants to become, dependant on them[19]. As a result, both parties are drawn together by qualities of independence and confidence, rather than deliberate attempts to lure people into wrongdoing. Ironically, people often fall in love unwittingly because they are focussing on a task and not paying conscious attention to the dynamics that are developing.

In the film *Two Weeks Notice* (Sandra Bullock and Hugh Grant), it is only when faced with parting that they begin to realise how their feelings for each other have developed. In the film, the honest conflict between the characters makes the drama convincing (and funny). When Sandra Bullock, exhausted by Hugh Grant's selfish demands, gives her two weeks notice, both of them suddenly take stock and realise that they want to be together but on different terms.

Equally convincing, once they become self-aware, they begin to dress and behave differently around each other, accentuating their sexual differences and qualities as men and women, rather than hiding them from each other. Bullock starts to play with her hair, interrupt Grant's meetings with other women, put on more attractive clothes, and get jealous. He, on the other hand, gets frustrated and angry that she will not show her feelings, flirts with other women to annoy her (and perhaps to

cope with his disappointment). Eventually, he publicly declares the strength of his feelings.

A common mistake is to think the behaviour at the *end* of a long process of seduction is the only 'seductive' behaviour. The following advice from Derek Vitalio's website - adapted so that it is relevant to both women and men – describes qualities that are considered attractive.

> *You must stand up for yourself. Set rules and boundaries and stick by them. Don't be afraid to say "no". If she wants the keys to your apartment and you're not ready to give them to her yet, don't be afraid to say "no". If he wants you to drive across the city to pickup some dry-cleaning and you were planning on visiting your friends, don't be afraid to say "no".*
>
> *Saying "no" is different from whining and complaining. Whining and complaining is saying "no" while at the same time caving into demands. That makes you look sorry and pathetic. Always act congruently with your words. Never do something that you know is the wrong thing to do or change your mind just to please someone. Don't be a pushover.*
>
> *Sure, you should always listen and take into account opinions and suggestions. But in the end, make your own best decisions and stand up for them. Remain true to yourself and your best judgment. That doesn't mean you need to win every time. But you do sometimes need to take your stand.*[20]

In short, the most seductive behaviour is completely different from the kind of advice dished out in popular magazines like FHM, Cosmopolitan and Glamour such as:

> *…immediately after you meet him – within seconds – touch him in some way, even if it's just to pick off imaginary lint…look down at his crotch…with a playful look or smile….wear gorgeous red underwear, and show it 'accidentally' – your blouse is open a bit, so a man gets a peek of red lace bra…you cross your legs and your skirt rides up…*[21]

In contrast, Vitalio's advice, while intended to have strong emotional impacts on women, is the reverse of 'leading someone astray'.

The eminent social psychologist, Professor Aronson, concurs with this view.[22] Happy couples, ironically, have *more* conflict in their relationships than less happy couples for the simple reason that they have learnt *from each other* that they can express their opinions freely. It means more arguments, but also more dialogue and interaction, as both parties learn the emotional benefits from expressing both positive and negative feelings openly to each other.

Some writers on seduction advocate that women should be submissive and men dominant. This advice is to mistake the game-playing of the *final stage* of seduction from the behaviour that precedes it. Truly seductive behaviour comes from the relaxed confidence of a person who values themselves and their own opinions. Their generosity and willingness to comprise – when finally offered – is not interpreted as manipulative, but as an expression of genuine thoughtfulness and care.

It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between honest game playing (seduction) and dishonest game-playing that involves tempting and then hurting the opposite sex. Eric Berne's excellent book *Games People Play* was the intellectual source for the best-selling I'm OK: You're OK. It devotes a chapter to sexual games, and the motives that underlie them.[23] In these games, seductive behaviour can sometime be a trap rather than an attempt to persuade a person into a committed relationship.

It is also helpful to review one study of 3,500 recently married couples that found the most attractive women were dressed in the *least* sexy ways. John Molloy found that the men classified the women quickly according to their dress-sense. Those who dressed sexily were regarded as seeking sex, rather than a relationship. Women who dress smartly were seen as 'relationship' material. Both types of women are attractive (seductive) to men, but for different reasons.

The woman who dresses in an obviously sexy way will seduce a man who is interested in sex, but she will

alienate men interested in longer-term relationships. The woman who dresses smartly seduces the man interested in a relationship and alienates the man only interested in sex. The female researchers initially did not believe this and focus groups had to be reconvened with different groups of men until they were convinced[24].

## Seduction and Emotion

Seduction – in the sense of building an equitable and reciprocal relationship – triggers strong emotions when parties enter the final stage. By this time both parties are self-aware of the feelings they have for the other, and are beginning to become aware that the other person wants a more intimate relationship.

In reviewing Ben's account, what is notable is how much he *resisted* the idea that Hayley was attracted to him. Hayley's growing confidence is expressed through her dress code – and Ben reinforces this when he pays her a compliment. Even after this, he only fully accepts her interest when she starts to ask his attitude to having more children. At this point, they quickly establish commitment to 'friendship' that acknowledges the sexual attraction but respects boundaries.

It is noteworthy that in a male/female context (and this would apply to a gay and lesbian relationships too) confidence brings about changes in behaviour as the "couple" deliberately activate each others' sexual feelings. Intense emotions are activated because past experience suggests to both parties there is a possibility of sexual pleasure. As we will see below, however, a similar process – albeit not so emotionally intense or sexual - occurs in business relationships, between employers and employees as well as customers and suppliers.

Think of a time you seduced, or felt seduced by someone. Did you feel led astray? Did you find you could talk to that person more than any other? Was the relationship equitable or one-sided? Who do you feel did most of the seducing – or was there an unspoken mutual attraction? Did you feel respected or disrespected? How long did the seduction last? Days, weeks, months or years? How did you feel about the relationship when it ended? Or are your now married, living with, or employed by that person?

## Seduction in Business

One of the most startling findings in my own research was the similarity in the seductive behaviours of women and men to the behaviours of employers and employees (even of the same sex). Below, I consider my own relationship with John – a director of Custom Products.

In my relationship with John, after an initial period of exchanging background information about our lives, we started to talk about our marriages. John initiated a discussion on 'soul mates' when he recommended a book. *The Bridge Across Forever* is a love story about a writer who puts up emotional defences to avoid a committed relationship. Eventually, he finds that his four year relationship with his agent is transforming into a committed sexual relationship. The book charts the journey the writer and his agent took. In terms of our subject matter, the book charts both the development of a love affair, but also the development of a business relationship.

After reading the book, I wrote to John:

*As for my wife, we are having more ups than downs. I found reading The Bridge Across Forever has given me considerable resolve - that passage you and I both liked is pinned to the wall by my desk. It helps.*

We also started giving each other help with business leads and supporting each others' aspirations. Emails are peppered with expressions like "take care", "have a lovely

weekend", "hope things are better at home". We started to go to the pub regularly after work to discuss a wide range of political, business and personal issues.

After an incident where I was encouraged to play a practical joke on John, we exchanged thoughts about it. Then, John used a phrase that was to recur frequently.

*Good to have you on board, Rory*

The phrase "on board" became a feature of dialogue, an indication of future commitment and shared values. The amount of flattery increased. I felt sufficiently confident to share some of my poetry and John replied:

*The poem was beautiful, you are a modern Renaissance man, it's many years since I tried my hand at poetry, I enjoy reading it occasionally, another one of those things that seem to be an indulgence in such a busy world, when in fact we should find more time for beauty. Thank you for passing on your kind thoughts. I feel a bit guilty that I have so little time to spend with you, but I am confident that our people couldn't be in better hands than yours.*

*John*

The tone of correspondence at this time is such that if I changed the name from John to Janet it is quite possible that an observer might think we are flirting! However, this is quite an apt way to see the exchanges. The two parties are trying to seduce each other into committing to a long-term relationship. Shortly afterwards, the level of candour reaches a new level.

*John,*

*I wanted to say how much I enjoyed our drink out the other night. I could feel myself relaxing and coming out (being myself) and I realised how much I now value your friendship. I appreciate that the things you shared with me were very private - and I'm glad that you are starting to feel you know the direction you want to take your life. As for me there seems to be a lot of good humour at the moment so things still feel good with Caroline. Thanks for all your help and support, and I hope to return it one day.*

*Best wishes*
*Rory*

As with Hayley and Ben, the flattery is reciprocated and enjoyable.

*Hi Rory,*

*You are more than welcome, it's not difficult offering support to good people like you!*

*Take care, see you Monday, John*

Nice man, John! The motives behind the seduction are complex. On my part, there were three reasons. Firstly, it was to maintain good access for research purposes. Secondly, I wanted to keep open the possibility of future work for the company. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I liked John and found him interesting. On John's part, the additional motives became clear when he offered employment.

*Hi Rory,*

*We were completing some strategic planning this week and were contemplating succession planning over the next three years. One of our dilemmas has always been the search for potential senior managers/directors. It would be really good if we knew exactly what aspirations you had over the next three years and whether a career here is something you would wish to pursue. Give this some thought and let me and Harry know how you feel when we get together.*

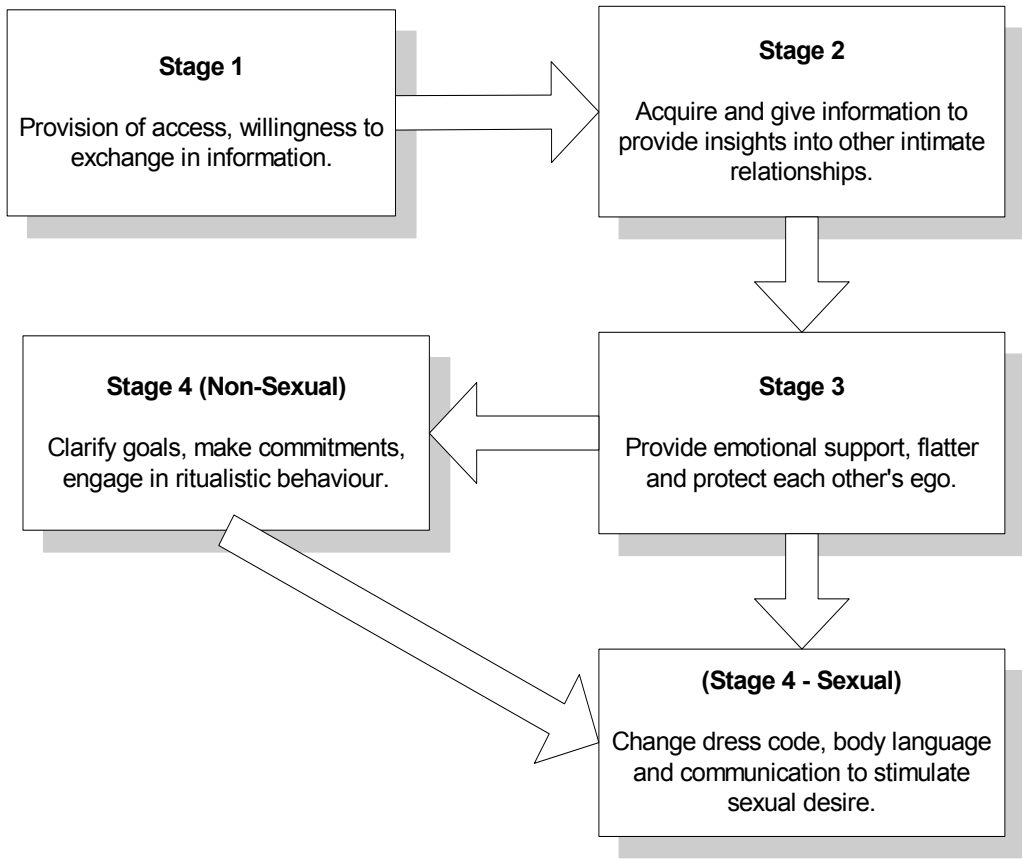
*Take care, kind regards as ever*
*John*

In concluding this section on employer/employee seduction, the most compelling finding is that apart from deliberately fuelling sexual desire, the process of same-sex seduction (or cross-sex in the case of lesbian and gay women and men) follows almost exactly the same path as heterosexual seduction.

## Summarising the Seduction Process

Figure 1 shows the different stages of seduction. A relationship may fail at any stage. During stage 1, both parties behave in ways that provide *access* and communicate a willingness to engage in information exchange. During stage 2 there is a continuing interest in acquiring *information* about the other. Initially, the information is biographical, but later each starts to tell stories about their life. The stories are initially non-risqué, but if interest in maintained the stories become more personal so that each understands the state of the other's intimate relationships.

### Figure 1 – The Stages of Seduction


Stage 1
Provision of access, willingness to exchange in information.
Stage 2
Acquire and give information to provide insights into other intimate relationships.
Stage 3
Provide emotional support, flatter and protect each other's ego.
Stage 4 (Non-Sexual)
Clarify goals, make commitments, engage in ritualistic behaviour.
(Stage 4 - Sexual)
Change dress code, body language and communication to stimulate sexual desire.

In stage 3, parties use this knowledge to provide emotional support. They may flatter each other to protect

and develop each other's ego. Each contributes to the sense of well-being of the other and their own confidence grows. In stage 4, this confidence is manifest through an increasing level of intimacy. Each clarifies their goals and talks about the relationship they would like. In some business contexts, this may be ritualistic and formal (e.g. an employment or supply contract negotiation). It may be accompanied by changes in clothing, body language and communication. In sexual relationships, changes involve rituals, and playful behaviours, that stimulate each other's sexual desire. If there is a long-term intent, future aspirations and commitments will be discussed.

In obtaining feedback from women, I received two interesting comments. Firstly, one person claimed that sometimes people 'live a lie' and obscure the truth about their current relationships in order to seduce someone. This can happen but the seduction will fail if the true state of these relationships is revealed, or one party starts to distrust the other. A person will normally reject the seducer if they are found to be deceitful. Living a lie is not the best seduction strategy, particularly if the goal is a committed relationship.

The second comment was that seduction might be spontaneous and "for no reason at all". I can concur that the seduction may be rapid – two people can go through all four stages in a matter of days (or hours!) if both enjoy spontaneity. Such behaviour might be found in holiday romances, or when people strike up quick relationships away from home at conferences or weddings. Spontaneous behaviour, however, is still purposeful and meets immediate emotional needs, even if not well understood. However long it takes, the *pattern* of behaviour, rather than the length of the intended relationship is the hallmark of seduction.

## Redefining Intimacy

A successful seduction leads to intimacy – a relationship in which previously private feelings and thoughts can be openly expressed and exchanged. As a verb, intimate means "to state or make known"[25]. As an adjective,

intimate means "closely acquainted, familiar". It can be used of people (e.g. "an intimate friend") or of knowledge (e.g. "intimate knowledge of a subject"). Intimacy, therefore, is linked to the idea of detailed knowledge about something or someone.

It is not necessary to engage in sexual acts, or have sexual desires towards another, for a relationship to be intimate. As a noun, an intimate means "a very close friend", not a lover. For a relationship to be intimate, an awareness of the other's sexual intentions and aspirations is typical, but it does not follow that there has to be sexual interest (even if this sometimes develops). Sometimes a relationship becomes *more intimate* when parties agree there is no mutual sexual interest (or that any interest will *not* be pursued).

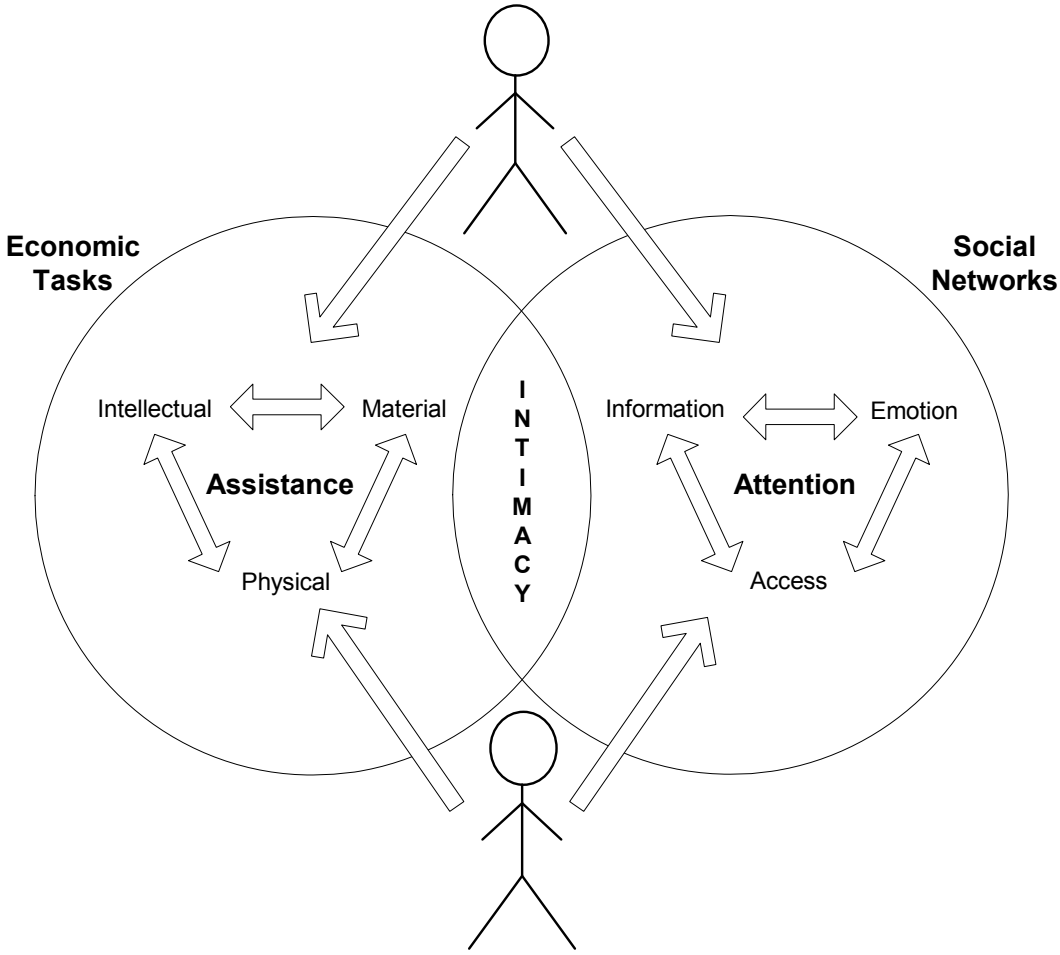
Amongst anthropologists like myself, an "intimate" is a term given to a person who provides information that is normally secret or hidden from others. In my work, I only succeed if I can build a network of "intimates" inside a company and compare the private reality of their lives to public claims about the culture.[26] Seduction (of the honest variety), and the ability to handle multiple intimate relationships, is a necessary – and dangerous - part of my work. Misunderstandings can and do happen!

Intimacy develops when two people seek to give each other both attention and assistance. In giving and getting attention, they seek opportunities to increase levels of access and information. As the amounts increase, emotional changes occur. If these are expressed openly, the parties feelings and future intentions affect whether the exchanges will continue. Sometimes, they stop.

When they continue, however, each offers different types of assistance. Physical assistance may range from helping with a task that requires physical labour to physical affection. Intellectual assistance could entail working out how to perform a task or advice on personal relationships. Material assistance may be paying for a meal or making a long-term financial commitment (through employment or marriage).

Figure 2 shows the interpersonal dynamics that occur during the development of intimacy:

**Figure 2 – Interpersonal Dynamics and Intimacy**




The strongest personal friendships involve dynamics of this nature. The strongest marriages also take on this character. Strong workplace and business relationship have this character too. In short, these are the dynamics inside strong and committed relationship of any type.

In an intimate relationship, both parties reassure 'the other' of their commitment by maintaining levels of **attention** and **assistance**. Those that start to resist assistance and attention – or avoid equitable exchange - are proactively avoiding intimacy to limit the development of the relationship. There can be many specific reasons for this, but all are underpinned by an emotional need to exercise caution. This might derive from emotional or physical hurt in a previous

relationship, or to protect another relationship. Emotional defences frustrate the development of intimacy and keep an individual safe (emotionally and physically speaking) *for other relationships*.

Strong relationships and the maximisation of economic efficiency goes hand in hand with the ability (and willingness) to overcome fears of intimacy. When this is achieved, relationships become more honest, information accuracy improves and fully informed decision-making can take place. For this reason, employers – particularly human resource departments – have developed a keen interest in the processes of persuasion that underpin seduction.

## Corporate Seduction

The anecdotes below illustrate a fascinating aspect of corporate life – the deliberate seduction of employees through the process of recruitment, induction and socialisation. Certainly, not all companies self-consciously organise their induction processes this way, but since the rise of 'culture management' in the 1980s – led by Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* - arguments for the conscious socialisation of each employee has gained credibility. Culture management – as a way of inducing commitment from employees – has become mainstream, but recently it has been subject to rigorous and critical scrutiny which has revealed unintended side-effects.

### Perspectives on Culture Management

In a landmark paper, Hugh Willmott identifies the central characteristic of 'culture management' as the systematic seduction of employees so that their desires and wants match those of senior managers.[27] This characterisation of seduction is at odds with the equitable process I have just described. Let me, therefore, consider criticisms of culture management that have surfaced.

Firstly, an obstacle – often unacknowledged by its advocates – lies in the governance systems and legal frameworks to which organisations have to comply.

There is a contradiction between the hierarchical nature of organisational life and the equitable nature of seduction. Unless equity can develop on both sides, full seduction cannot occur – neither is able to commit fully to the relationship. Both charity and company law place legal duties on senior executives. As a result, there are unequal responsibilities placed on different contributors leading to inequities that frustrate the development of intimacy (and, by implication, organisation efficiency).

Secondly, groups often develop their own intimate behaviours and thrive by differentiating themselves from other groups. Loyalty is expected from anyone seeking to be a member and this is expressed through public declarations of commitment to group values (established indirectly by leaders and followers through humour and the way they handle disputes and disagreements). While this promotes intimacy *within* groups, it frustrates intimacy *between* groups.

To get an idea, think of *Romeo and Juliet*, or *West Side Story*. These dramas show how intimate relationships across group boundaries can be fraught with problems because of conflicting demands that group members be loyal to members of their existing group (i.e. show hostility to members of other groups). This dynamic also plays out in corporate settings.

## Contradictions in Corporate Seduction

Tom Peters, one of the principal advocates of culture management argues that companies:

> *…simply allow for – and take advantage of – the emotional, more primitive side (good and bad) of human nature. They provide an opportunity to be the best, a context for the pursuit of quality and excellence. They offer support – more, celebration; they use small intimate units…; and they provide within protected settings opportunities to stand out….*[28]

This is a useful quote except for the reference to the "more primitive side" of human nature. I would argue, on the basis of the previous chapter, that our emotions are the "most evolved side" of our human nature. In

addition, the theme of equality and respect is recurrent - employees are talked about as if part of a happy family.

> *Treat people as adults. Treat them as partners; treat them with dignity; treat them with **respect**. Treat **them** – not as capital spending and automation – but as the primary source of productivity gains.*[29]

And there's the rub – productivity gains. As Hugh Willmott points out with some eloquence, there is a contradiction at the heart of 'culture management'. Under current company law, companies *have* to operate using a system of hierarchical controls, even if they do not wish to. Senior managers, therefore, can be caught between a management ideology promoting people as valuable 'assets' and a system of law entitling directors (or shareholders) to force managers into laying off staff when trading conditions worsen.

Employees regularly see managers disposing of employees (through sackings, redundancies or programmes for replacing permanent posts with temporary staff on renewable contracts). As a result, they understand fully the limits of the 'equality' and 'reciprocity' on offer. While there are calls for loyalty, and penalties for disloyalty, employees are constantly reminded that the CEO may wish to make them redundant next year to secure their own job and restore profitability (or, as the CEO might describe it, "to ensure the company's survival").

The message that reaches employees is something like the following:

> *…if you behave (don't question the 'culture thing') and conform ('jump through the hoops that we set and play the games that we organise') then you'll probably keep your job when there is another shake up – but don't hold me to that!*

Where employees work out that there is deliberate and conscious manipulation of their thoughts to achieve productivity gains (and believe the gains will not be fairly shared with them) this triggers powerful counter-cultures known as 'soldiering'. In such a counter-culture, workers maximise their own gains while minimising the help they

give other groups (e.g. managers). Such counter-cultures are not inevitable. If 'culture management' is coupled with genuine decision-making power, and fair surplus sharing arrangements, it can produce results claimed by its advocates.[30] Even then, the results do not satisfy everyone.[31]

## Recruitment

Culture management techniques are sophisticated and rely on knowledge gained from psychology. During recruitment, the company finds out a great deal about employees. Some may find this intrusive, but usually these high levels of attention give the impression that recruiters are genuinely attracted to the recruits. Tours are given, information is carefully dispensed, interviews explore candidates' background, ask them to talk about their personal lives. While this is all done in the name of getting a 'rounded picture' of the candidate, behaviour is carefully scrutinised to see if a person is a 'team player' (i.e. sociable and willing to conform to group norms).

At Custom Products, the first interview evaluates the following:

- First Impressions
- Working/Learning in Organisations
- Personal and Professional Development
- Socialising
- Team Player
- Cultural Fit and Philosophy
- People Skills
- Motivation, Resilience and Honesty

The candidate remains largely unaware that while they are talking about their life and upbringing, and the good and bad times they had in each job, the interviewers are considering these aspects of their life and character.

In some job interviews, people are given tough questions on the requirements of the job, or why they want to work for the company (to see if they have bothered to find out what the company does). In contrast, Custom Products' approach is to invite someone in for an intimate chat and give them free reign to talk about themselves within a broad framework.

No "hard" questions are asked, although sometimes people are unsure what to say when asked about their "personal philosophy". Despite the lack of challenging questions, the interview process can be deeply emotional. Here is how I described the interview process after going through it:

> *I got emotional several times; firstly, when we discussed a management training course I attended – Diane (the interviewer) shared her own experience that was similar. I could feel my body going tight and rigid while talking about it. Secondly, I got emotional talking about my strengths and weaknesses. I focussed on 'caring too much' and sometimes hurting people. At one point I felt tears in my eyes.*

Such descriptions were quite common amongst new recruits. After talking for 3 hours or more, and culminating with questions about the most intimate areas of a person's private life, it was common for interviewees to experience extremes of emotion and sometimes shed tears.

In place of the formal testing approach characteristic of 'rational' recruitment, Custom Products created an informal atmosphere. And they did not push candidates to do anything. This – I found – was deliberate. They only wanted people to work for them if they were motivated to do so without pushing them. Publicly, this was justified as a way of ensuring they only offered jobs to people who really wanted to work for them. A dip into books about seduction, however, suggests that the motive may be to increase the attractiveness of the company to the recruit.

The rationale, according to managers, was that people should "deselect" themselves if they are not willing to accept the culture. However, the techniques used are

consistent with psychological manipulation designed to induce commitment subconsciously. The first technique is deliberately stoking a person's emotions. A leaflet is sent to the candidate about the company. This includes personal stories and tributes to former staff that produce an emotional response. An appeal to sentiment rather than logic is regarded as the "peripheral" route to persuasion and works by triggering emotions which reduce scrutiny of logical arguments.[32] Everyone, it seems, is a sucker for a "good cause".

The leaflet also contains a challenge: members must accept not only the rights defined through consultation with staff, but also various responsibilities. The responsibilities include upholding values of respect, support, fairness and consistency, as well as responsibilities to work flexibly in return for a share of profits. These moral challenges also provoke an emotional response by challenging candidates to be selfless in order to make a "contribution to the community".

The second technique is to get the candidate to proactively do favours for the company[33]. In the recruitment process, the potential applicant has to visit the offices, take a tour, take an application, fill in the application (in addition to sending a CV), read a leaflet etc. While this is presented as something for the candidate's benefit, it actually produces a particular mindset.

An applicant to Custom Products has to justify six separate *proactive* favours that other companies may not require. Repeatedly getting someone to do favours while inducing emotional reactions is a technique used by professional seducers. Each favour produces dissonance (it requires additional effort on the part of the candidate that they must justify to themselves). Those who perform the favour have to convince themselves that the requester is worthy of the favour. Each favour they perform increases the attraction of the company to the candidate.[34] The design of the recruitment process, therefore, does more than screen out those who are not interested - it *increases* the interest of those who are *already* interested.

## The Effects of Supply and Demand

During the recruitment process, candidates are – to put it bluntly – being 'wooed' in an extremely subtle way. It can, however, backfire. It may inadvertently benefit conformists (those who get emotional pleasure from fulfilling others' expectations), or be more attractive to those who enjoy the challenge of navigating cultural obstacles to 'success'. Those with a strong need for a change of employment will make more effort, while those who do not will make less. Those who do not receive the attention to which they are accustomed may sense that the company does not respect them (or their skills). Consequently, they may be less willing to engage in rituals that demonstrate commitment, or turn in a poorer 'performance' at interview even though they are stronger candidates.

I witnessed the effects of such a backfiring process during the 1980s/90s in the IT industry. Compulsory tendering was introduced into the public sector and strongly promoted by the then Conservative government as 'best practice'. By the end of the decade, however, a number of our competitors (the more successful ones) privately admitted that they were no longer submitting tenders. Their reputation, based on previous work and word-of-mouth recommendation, was sufficient to create demand and they preferred to build relationships with those they desired to work with, rather than engage in tender processes that few perceived as fair. Two common questions upon being invited to tender were: "How many other companies are tendering? Who are they?" A guarded response may result in no tender (if busy) or a half-hearted tender (if not busy).[35]

Just as good model agencies are inundated with approaches from attractive women (and publishers and literary agents with unsolicited manuscripts from talented writers) able companies do not need to *proactively* seduce potential recruits or customers. The impact of supply/demand dynamics requires that would-be models and writers have to proactively seduce busy agencies rather than the other way around.

Think of the last time you recruited or were recruited by an organisation. What was the process? What information was provided to you? Was anything important withheld? What was expected of you? What did you provide to them? What did you withhold? Was it equitable, enjoyable or stressful?

All organisations develop a process – formal or informal – to sell themselves (or not) to potential recruits. All recruits develop a process (or not) that projects an image to a potential employer, customer or supplier. Are you self-aware of your process?

## Induction

The recruitment process at Custom Products goes a long way to completing stages 1 and 2 of seduction. The third stage involves deepening the relationship so that people feel they have emotional support. This happens in a variety of ways. Firstly, people have a week long induction during which they work for an hour or two in every department (or at least sit with someone who explains their work).

Compare this with one of my former work colleagues who, on his first day of one new job was directed to sit in the corner, read a manual, then "get on with it". At Custom Products, a new recruit meets dozens of people in the first week and talks to each of them for an hour or more. The impact is measurable. Here is how I described my second induction day.

> *Larissa said that 'one thing you'll find about this place is that it is full of nice people, really laid back'. I appreciated this - it was as if she was giving me the 'inside' view that it was a good place to work…I liked her - at lunch when I went to sit on a table by myself she indicated I should join her. I sat with her as she introduced me to her friend Irene. Larissa was about to go on her first 'social' with some of the other 'girls' from the production department - they were meeting up outside work for a curry.*

Larissa mentions 'socials'. This was a word that many people used to describe regular get togethers. During recruitment, people who do not like to socialise with their work colleagues are screened out. Those who later refuse to take part in compulsory social events are (if they do not relent) encouraged out of the company.

'Socials' are one place were stages 3 and 4 of the seduction occurs. The recruitment of people who like to socialise guarantees that most people will give each other affection and attention. Below, Ben describes the dynamics at an after work drink:

> *People are bonding inside the team. I went and got a card and cakes for Hayley's birthday and when I gave them to her she gave me a hug. Then I told her I had not had a good weekend. I was a bit cautious at first - I said all relationships have their problems - but then she opened up and told me about her mother having breast cancer and how this had affected her and her family over the last decade. I found myself explaining in more detail about what had happened at home. We listened to each other - I think this isn't anything more than friendship - but it was nice to talk a bit. I did feel the need to talk. I just feel closer and closer to people at work.*
>
> *John was also there, and he opened up about the past. Harry and some other directors all have Physical Education degrees. They have this common bond between them through an interest in athletics. There were lots of people opening up and getting to know each other better, talking about themselves and their past, giving details about little things that let others into their lives. This is not just within our team – this drink was after a class to learn about the culture. We were all chatting away and talking about Diane's son and the great battle she has over his schooling. I think she needed to get it off her chest. She says that she does not get out for a drink often, which (laughs) means that maybe I'm bringing her out of herself, I don't know, because she's been out for a drink several times with me.*

## Formal Company Events

If stages 3 and 4 are not achieved at 'socials', an annual Presentation Evening provides another opportunity to give people emotional support and sexual attention. At this event, newcomers are welcomed formally, and awards are given to outstanding achievers. Diane described the format of the evening:

> *Gifts are given to newcomers, and those with 5, 10, and now 15 years service. The two big awards, however, are for the person who has developed the most, voted for by managers, and the person who best embodies the values and culture of the company. The second award – named after the company founder - is voted for by all permanent employees with more than 1 years service…I chatted to the person who received the award this year and was really moved. She told me that when she heard her name, her mind went completely blank (pause) …she could not remember anything after that. To be voted this award by your fellow employees must be an experience beyond measure, I imagine.*

Diane did not have to wait long to experience this herself – a year later she won the same award and I talked to her afterwards. She said that the whole evening became something of a blur after winning and she felt as if she was on "cloud nine" for several days.

Diane also talked about the bawdier side of the evening:

> *We had a 'Bum of the Year' award in which staff voted for the most attractive butt from a series of pictures. These were the butts of a number of male members of staff…The women did something similar – men voted for 'Bust of the Year'. John - to his horror (he thought his butt would not be attributed to him) - was named as 'Bum of the Year'. It was hilarious - John's butt was amazing, when I first saw it I thought it was as good as any male model!*

I missed the Presentation Evening in 2002, but was able to attend one that took place in 2003. The highlight of the evening was a series of departmental

'presentations' with staff doing wacky and outlandish things so others could have a good laugh. There were also two set-piece sexual extravaganzas. Firstly, a group of the women appeared on the big screen dressed in suspenders and stockings to the tune of *It's Raining Men*. Then from all sides, groups of male employees ran around them as they pretended to dance in a sexual way. Not to be outdone, the men prepared a version of the Full Monty – but did not do the entire striptease.

After this, there were some semi-formal speeches and awards. As Harry wound down the award ceremony and directed people to the dining areas, he told the audience that he had one more surprise. Up started the music to the Full Monty again and on marched the half-dozen men who had been on the video screen. They completed the rest of the dance and when they took away their hats – all six had a flashing red willy attached to a skimpy thong!

Through these corporate rituals, stages 3 and 4 of seduction are given a boost. People's egos are flattered during presentation ceremonies, and they receive (sexual) attention through the departmental attempts to participate in corporate "fun". The sexual extravaganzas are deliberately organised in the hope that having "fun" together will promote bonding between staff and induce them to increase their emotional commitment to the workplace.

## Consultations

The serious end of the process, however, comes when staff are asked to participate in key decisions about the company's future. In 2004, a stage 4 situation arose when company executives put proposals to staff for an employee-buyout. The day was controlled by Harry and John – the two most senior directors. Each wore radio microphones so that wherever they walked, they could talk to all staff.

The day started with humour – with Harry showing pictures from a company day-trip to Venice. He cracked a series of jokes about the gargoyles on the roof of the churches, then displayed a church spire sporting a Robin

Hood-like archer (to indicate the wind direction). Harry paused for effect, then said:

*I have no idea how John got up there!*

Such self-depreciating humour went down extremely well. As a quick look at social psychology texts reveal, however, humour not only relaxes people, it also triggers hormonal reactions in the brain that make people more susceptible to persuasion. This is why Emily Duberley advises that a good way to 'pull anyone' is laughter because "a shared sense of humour is a great way to bond".[36]

The presentations and discussions went on all morning. Most staff seemed to be enthusiastically doing what was expected of them. But on one table, a woman called Tanya was red-faced and growing more angry by the minute. I decided to go over and have a chat. She commented that:

*This whole day is an insult to any thinking person and an exercise in manipulation. When John speaks up it is just like previous years – they pick the groups who make the comments they want to hear and then everyone is told to consider what they say. Only 3 tables out of 12 made the point we are now discussing, but now we are all discussing it because that is what Harry and John want us to discuss.*

Some of her colleagues supported her point of view. Tanya, who had worked in the company for over 10 years complained that the answers to the questions had already been rehearsed. This was true. I attended meetings between managers and a director where the latter gathered questions then worked out answers for a follow up meeting. During the 'consultation', I heard managers giving these answers to staff who asked similar questions to their own. I even heard people repeating arguments, word for word, that I had contributed to the earlier meeting.

Fred believed it was not a genuine debate but a *fait acompli* – directors were using sales techniques to sell proposals back to their own staff. Terry described an earlier 'consultation' as a "bitter pill to swallow".

My own view – expressed to several people that day – was that Harry and John both wanted to get the rewards they had been working towards for a decade by selling the company (they stood to make about £3m between them if the proposals went through). At the same time, they were committed to ensuring that future wealth was owned and controlled by the staff through an employee trust. Although there is a debate to be had over whether they were exploiting their own staff twice over[37], when compared to other businesspeople Harry's and John's proposals were generous and heart-felt.

Harry claims he could have doubled the money he made by selling the company privately or taking it public – a moot point if you think this money was already acquired through exploitation of workers' labour – but *in his own mind he was giving up about £2.5m of his own future income to ensure that the staff could own the company*. There is an integrity of sorts here and most staff understood this.

At the conclusion of the day, Harry used a powerful emotional appeal, and the staff's reaction says a great deal about the extent to which he had seduced them:

> *He said to them "I could not contemplate selling without giving employees the opportunity". Then he exhorted them to "back themselves" and "buck the trend" before asking loudly "who rightfully owns this company?" At this point staff spontaneously broke into a round of applause.*

Two months later, 76% of staff voted to establish both a governing council, elected from the workforce, and an employee share trust that would own the company. Through 'socials', 'presentation evenings' and 'development days' like the one discussed above, stages 3 and 4 of seduction are completed. Harry and John, the two most senior directors, used an array of techniques to enter into a long-term commitment with their workforce. They seduced them into a new type of relationship through which ownership passed from a minority of shareholders to a employee-owned trust.

Whether the seduction was equitable and in the interests of all parties is a different matter. Those people in the company who perceive the changes as equitable

will become more committed and intimate with each other. This in itself may lead to the benefits and efficiencies that are envisaged (a self-fulfilling prophecy). Those who object may leave, or challenge the way reforms are implemented, creating unforeseen problems that future generations will have to address. Perception and emotion will continue to play a role in determining future outcomes.

## Seduction in the Sales Process

The kinds of techniques described here can be reproduced in the sales process, and it has long been appreciated just how effective the use of attractive people can be in advertising. Supermodels and sportspeople, particularly if they are flaunting their sexuality, or less well known models hinting at sex, have created legends in the advertising world (e.g. the Gold Blend 'love story' over a cup of coffee, 'size matters' selling cars to women etc.).

Mintel, the leading marketing intelligence agency, captures contemporary views on advertising in its 2002 report. Subtle - but not crude - references to sex remain the most effective with 'sophisticated' consumers. They like to be wooed with humour. The report also highlights, for the first time, that men are growing tired of the way they are ridiculed in adverts, even through such adverts remain popular amongst women.[38]

Remarks need to be obvious enough to activate a viewer's imagination but not so blatant that they are offensive. Sophisticated consumers (defined as social classes A, B and C) prefer to be seduced through wit and understatement. In other markets, however, a more bawdy approach can be successful. The *Daily Sport* did not grow so fast through understatement or subtle displays of sexuality!

It is unlikely that you need much persuading that advertisers use these techniques regularly, so I will not discuss them here. In the case of relationship-building in sales work, however, consider the following conversation about Simon. In this letter, Andy (Chief Executive) writes to Gayle (Company Secretary):

*Simon [Marketing Manager] made a lot of your looks – your 'presentability' shall we call it – as a potential advantage to the company, but I was less convinced that this was an appropriate reason to appoint you. You deserved the post on the basis of your experience. I think Simon's attitude came across quite regularly in the workplace. He was all for you doing sales stuff without regard for your discomfort about selling. This was rooted in his view that all the systems he was involved in purchasing were demonstrated by women! What does that tell you about his previous workplace? What does that tell you about Simon?*

Not to mention the suppliers! One of my research participants – a salesperson with over 30 years experience – was convinced that "people buy from people". They were cynical about the effectiveness of marketing hype when a product or service required some explanation to use, or the financial outlay required group approval. While marketing hype can work with a consumer product, in other circumstances sales staff use seduction skills (in the widest, not just sexual sense). Research, however, repeatedly shows that sales can be grown by having people sexually attractive to the customer involved in contract negotiations, even in professions that are completely unrelated to sex.[39]

The best salespeople are experts in seduction but this does not necessarily imply the process is dishonest. One salesperson I worked with was called David – twice salesperson of the year at his previous employer. He had a favourite story:

*There was this big account that I wanted to win. It was not hard to convince the techies that they needed the system but the manager was a much harder nut to crack. I had lunch with him one day and he kept going on about these reports that were required by the directors – it really was the bane of his life and he was so distracted that he did not want to talk about the system I was trying to sell.*

*When I returned to the office, I chatted to some of our own guys and they helped me work out how I could produce the reports that the manager needed. The next time I went to*

*see the client, I took samples along. The "hard nut" cracked and became the biggest advocate for the new system - we sold it without any more problems. He was my best customer for years afterwards.*

David told me this story to stress that sales is about problem-solving, not just about looking good (i.e. doing slick 'presentations' or being presentable) it is about meeting and exceeding the expectations of your client. He agreed, however, that people particularly enjoy being helped (seduced) by someone they find desirable. Even if understated, the process of sales – and any other aspect of 'doing business' - is most effective when personal chemistry combines with a genuine desire to assist the other.

Whether David *really* cared about this client – and he assures me that he did - is a moot-point. His behaviour showed that he cared enough to go back to his office, think about the problem troubling his client, and help out as best he could. This willingness to care is a pre-requisite of seduction, but it only works – ironically – when it does not come across as self-sacrifice or a betrayal of the *sellers'* interests.

When a person 'cares too much' or appears to be acting *against* their own interests, it has the reverse effect because the impression created is that a person 'looks desperate'. Drawing on the advice of Derek Vitalio again, but adapting it for both genders, let us look at why people are not seduced into commitments by someone who is overgenerous:

*Somewhere along the way you systematically rewarded them for bad behaviour. You are rewarding them for spoiled, rotten, moody, cold behaviour. This loses their respect. Or perhaps you got into a relationship with a person spoiled by others and you are continuing their rotten education. How did you get stuck in this tragic situation in the first place? You caved into every whim no matter how inconvenient it was to you.*[40]

There is an irony here – a person's seductive skills are strongest when they are not too generous, even if that means sometimes being forceful, assertive (and maybe

even angry) with another when they make demands. The issue here is not that you resort to bullying, rather that you show your commitment to equity, a balance of power, and that you will neither take the other party for granted or be taken for granted by them.

There is one word of caution, however. Any person habitually used to getting their way is likely to get angry or distressed if you resist their demands. However, it is inadvisable to reward their behaviour by 'caving in' until they acknowledge and listen to your point of view!

## What Happens if the Seduction Fails?

Sometimes, the reality of the workplace hits home. Managers have limited time and cannot give equal amounts of attention to all. This means that – in a company organised hierarchically – managers are selective in the attention and support they give their staff. Even if a manager is trying to be fair, it may not be perceived by those who feel slighted and ignored.

The seduction may fail for reasons beyond managers' control. Weekend working, seeing people get sacked, workers talking to friends who want to leave or who have seen people hurt by the selective attention of those "in power", failing to get a pay rise that was perceived as a promise - all these experiences reinforce that there is a pecking order determined by senior staff.

Decisions are perceived as top-down rather than bottom-up. Except in those rare organisations that allow staff to elect and subject their own leaders to critical questioning – and sometimes even then - the reality of organisational life is that hierarchies develop in response to top-down appointments and the time pressures on managers. Emotions are activated and then crushed by the lack of time (or lack of desire) to accommodate others' perspectives.

At Custom Products, one person anonymously sent me their response to a staff satisfaction survey complaining that after two years of exceeding their targets they had not received either a pay rise or promotion that recognised their contribution. They gave *directors* 2 out

of 10 on a number of questions, but 8 out of 10 to their immediate line manager. The tales of people like these – and there were several from different parts of the company - were characterised by an increasing fear of managers, alienation, emotional distress, despair and the "oppression" typically associated with totalitarian states.

After 5 years of continuous 'temporary' employment, one women who failed an interview for a permanent position said "I just don't know what they want from me". Others resented having to attend an interview at all after several years of working for the organisation. In this case, she gave up and got employment elsewhere. Those marginalized talked of 'spies', 'politburos' and 'communist' behaviour where you could not trust even your friends and close work colleagues to keep confidences.

The contractual obligation to be 'open and honest' worked in managers' favour. Staff were often too scared – if challenged – to withhold the nature of private conversations for fear of losing their job. At the same time, senior managers would not allow their own motives to be debated openly and honestly when I sought to investigate controversial conflicts. The "open and honest" requirement theoretically applied to all staff. In practice, it was strongly influenced by power relations linked to hierarchical line management.

## The Paradox of 'Caring'

What sort of effect does a well planned seduction have on employees? This is how I described my feelings after working at Custom Products for two months.

> *If the way that I'm feeling now is anything to go by, the way that people are perceiving me and the way that people are reacting to me, it is changing my view of myself. Not only can I see what a wide range of skills and contributions I can make… (pause) but I just like myself more (long pause)…(tearfully)…and that is so good.*

After 9 months, at the point I left Custom Products to start micro-analysing the data I had collected, the tone of my reflections had changed somewhat:

*I found the place more oppressive than I expected. There was not a live and let live approach. This was shown by the smoking issues and also with regard to sexual conduct, partly of women, particularly of men. I saw inconsistencies in the way peers/managers regarded flirting. The tendency was toward oppression when the organisation wanted to get someone out. They upheld values with rigour but occasionally that offended my sense of fairness. I accept comments that sometimes people mistake having a voice for getting their way. Even so, the control was quite strong and while disagreement is tolerated, resolution must be achieved through the structures that are set up for it. The problem is, of course, that using those structures almost certainly guarantees that managers get their way.*

After 18 months, having reviewed all the data, I was surprised at the number of conflicts recorded and how explosive these could be. Sometimes, they were rooted in a genuine disagreement over values - such as the refusal of the company to confirm the permanent appointment of a "disabled" person[41]. Other disagreements erupted over petty issues like who was invited to a drink, how and where smokers could smoke, or banter about attractiveness (see page 212).

Custom Products was a text book example of an organisation that sets out to be 'caring' without pandering to employees' every whim. This led to a peculiar paradox. Alongside a swathe of incoming and recent recruits enthused by the "caring culture" there was a core of cynical long-timers who had learnt that senior staff "treat us like children if we try to say anything against the culture".

Company documents claim the organisation exists "primarily in order to enhance the lives of all those employed within it…[and]… strives to go beyond the notion of simply a means of survival"[42]. I found many staff who said their sense of well-being improved by working amongst people who wanted (and were willing to be) supportive friends – this played a part in transforming their lives. For others who felt manipulated or let down by the promise of self-fulfilment, respect and

care, it was a different story. Often they made personal sacrifices, and gave contributions well beyond the norm, only for their efforts to go unnoticed or unrewarded. A picture of 'well-being' surfaced in analysis of staff turnover that showed the numbers of leavers was at least twice (and perhaps as much as four times) higher than expected.[43]

Corporations are well equipped to apply scientific knowledge about seduction to their employees – they may, as was the case at Custom Products, employ psychologists to help them with this. If sincere, and the results are perceived as equitable to all parties, it works. But beware the manager, or executive group, that engages in this type of behaviour without really loving their workforce (or who deludes themself that they do). It will be found out, typically through management behaviours and unfilled expectations rather than words and deliberate acts of malice. It can trigger – gradually, or explosively - reactions characteristic of lovers who feel betrayed or cheated.

## Management Knowledge and Seduction

In reviewing this chapter with my wife, Caroline, we discussed the nature and morality of seduction. Is seduction a euphemism for manipulation or a way of behaving that helps people release themselves from their inhibitions? My wife's initial view – and the view that is probably understood by most people – is that 'seduction' is a process by which someone's desires are altered quickly by an irresistible force. The implicit suggestion is that the seducer leads people astray using deception, inducing them to get into bed (or buy a product) by applying emotional pressure.

If you scan the bookshelves of Waterstones or the on-line shelves of Amazon.co.uk, there will be an array of self-help books that advise you how to magically transform yourself so that you can "win friends and influence" or "make anyone fall in love with you" or become a "highly effective manager". These books occasionally provide useful insights to those who *already* attract people but cannot "close the deal".

But – and it is quite a big but – the advice is usually more useful to the party goer looking for a casual relationship or the salesperson looking to close the easy sale. While they might help with stage 4 – the end-game where two parties take pleasure in games that precede an expected union - it does nothing to help understand stages 1 to 3 that help get them to that position. As Caroline and I talked, **we came to a more considered perspective that sees seduction as an ongoing process by which two people increase the level of intimacy until they feel confident enough to make an emotional commitment.**

Having made that commitment, stages 3 and 4 of seduction can be replayed as often as required to maintain a healthy, stimulating and interesting relationship. Or they may never be played again, if that is what one or other party wishes. This perspective on seduction makes clear why behaviours are similar in different contexts. We also use sexuality, and seductive behaviours, to find and keep good employees, win and keep customers, get preferential treatment from suppliers, develop business contacts, and develop lifelong friendships.

It made me realise why I get so annoyed when I see stories in the press claiming "I was seduced by X into doing Y". Seduction is not *always* wicked and nasty, used only by the calculative and selfish to meet 'depraved sexual perversions'. Seduction can be seen as a process of mutual learning, an emotionally fulfilling and deeply honest process that helps people conquer their fears. In the process, they gain the confidence to reveal their thoughts and feelings in a safe and secure environment. It can also be an experience that brings lasting emotional benefits, good health and efficient social organisation.

This updated view of seduction offers possibilities to managers and staff alike – within peer-groups particularly – but also in organisations seeking to develop democratic know-how. The promotion of intimacy becomes a guiding principle that governs the development of social processes (e.g. marketing, selling, grievance handling and staff development). It can also

inform governance processes and constitutional structures.

Let me round off the chapter by putting some propositions to you that we can carry forward into the rest of the book.

## Summary

The evidence in this chapter suggests the following:

- Seduction is promoted by a caring attitude, preparedness to make commitments, attractive presentation and honesty.
- Seduction, underpinned by honest intent, underpins activities that are socially (or economically) beneficial to both parties.
- Trust and respect increase if oriented toward a long-term committed relationship, or a mutual short-term goal.
- Trust and respect decrease if the outcome is not equitable.

Seduction involves continually broaching new subjects to develop the relationship. The result is flirting:

- Flirting can be enjoyable and productive, if both parties understand each others' character, boundaries and intentions.
- Flirting can trigger explosive conflict, if parties do not understand each others' character, boundaries or intentions.
- Flirting is itself a process by which two parties establish each others' boundaries and intentions.

There is a circular relationship, therefore, between the ability to flirt and ability to establish social boundaries and intentions. I will return this in chapters 5 and 6, but in the next chapter, I consider the impact of relationship failure on social control and the motives for disciplining. I consider how those who feel hurt when a seduction fails start to discipline others as a punishment. Discipline

does not just occur between managers and workers - it also occurs within peer-groups, sexual partners, same sex groups, as well as customers and suppliers. Nor is disciplining seen as a way for those who are 'right' to control those who are 'wrong'. It is viewed as a way that one person, or social group, disrupts potentially threatening relationships, or suppresses debate that is potentially harmful to its own interests.

## Notes on Chapter 3

1 Friedan, B. (1963) *The Feminine Mystique*, Penguin, Chapter 11. See also two major surveys in India Today (2004) in which men and women report roughly equal interest in sex, and sexual satisfaction, and equal interest in satisfying their partner.

2 Lowndes, L. (2002) *How to Make Anyone Fall in Love with You,* Element. Based on academic research by Moore, M. (1985) 'Nonverbal Courtship Patterns in Women: Contact and Consequences', *Ethnology and Sociobiology,* 6(237-247) and Perper, T. (1985) *Sex Signals: The Biology of Love*, ISI Press. See also Pease, A., Pease, B. (2004), *The Definitive Book of Body Language,* Orion, p. 290.

3 Farrell, W. (1988) *Why Men Are the Way They Are: The Definitive Guide to Love, Sex and Intimacy*, Bantam Books, pp. 150-185.

4 Muehlenhard, C. L., Cook, S. W. (1988) "Men's Self Reports of Unwanted Sexual Activity," *Journal of Sex Research,* Vol 2, pp. 58-72. The study was conducted to compare men's self-reports with those of women found in an earlier study. The comparison's showed that 98% of women v 94% of men reported unwanted sexual attention, while 46% of women and 63% of men reported unwanted sexual intercourse. The original report based on women's responses prompted the radical feminist claim that "all men are rapists, or potential rapists". By the same standard, more women than men would be regarded as rapists.

5 Friedan, B. (1963) *The Feminine Mystique,* Penguin Books, Chapter 11 deals with the phenomenon. On page 230 she claims that after 1950 sex-stories in women's fiction and magazines outnumbered those in men's magazines (without providing much "hard" data, it should be noted).

6 Farrell, W. (2000) *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say,* pp. 194-195. Harlequin changed its romance formula after discovering that 70% of readers had jobs. The result? A 20,000% increase in profitability over 10 years with nett revenues up from $110,000 to $21m and an 80% market share. Exact sources are provided in the original text. Further evidence comes from the success of *Bridget Jones Diary*.

7 On-line registrations based on statistics available from FaceParty.com in 2003. Comments on personal ads based on examination of a local paper over a 3 year period to repeatedly check the balance between men and women seeking romance. Without fail, there are around 5 columns of ads from women seeking men,

and 3 columns from men seeking women, and occasional ads from lesbians and gays.

8 Farrell, W. (1988) *Why Men Are The Way They Are,* Bantam Books, p. 13.

9 Buss, D. M. (2002) "Human Mating Strategies", *Samdunfsokonemen,* 4 - 2002: 48-58. This paper contains a brief discussion of the material gains that women consistently seek from 'short-term' mating activities as well as a review of earlier research showing that women across 37 cultures value the material wealth of men twice as much as men value the material wealth of women. See also Smith, Amelia (2005), *Girls Just Want to Marry and Stay Home,* UK Men's Movement Magazine: February 2005, p. 33. She states: "According to a survey of 5,000 plus teenage girls in Britain, their main ambition is to complete university then return to the homestead – whether their partners like it or not. More than nine out of 10 of the girls believe it should be up to their husbands to provide for them, with 97% disagreeing with the statement 'It doesn't matter who is the main earner, as long as we are happy'."

10 Winston, R. (2003) *Human Instinct,* Bantam Books.

11 E-mail monitor conducted 21/12/2007 – 27/12/2007 following publication of the book. In this one week period, the author received 78 *unsolicited* offers from women promoting their pornography, four e-mails from complete strangers asking for a 'date' and one unsolicited offer from a prostitute. Projected for the year, this is 4,316 unsolicited offers by women to sell sex. These figures *exclude* offers made via MySpace pages, Bebo and FaceBook. In addition, there were nine offers of a penis enlarger, 30 offers of viagra and two adverts for sex toys. Added to the offers from women, this increases unsolicited emails about sex (projected for 12 months) to 6,448 each year.

12 Clarke, R. D., Hatfield, E. (1989) "Gender differences in receptivity to sexual offers", *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality,* 2(39-55).

13 Vilar, E. (1999) *The Manipulated Man,* Pinter & Martin, pp. 72-78.

14 Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power,* Berkley Books.

15 Molloy, J. (2003) *Why Men Marry Some Women and Not Others,* Element. See also Johnson, A. M., Mercer, C. H., Erans, B., Copas, A. J., McManus, S., Wellings, K., Fenton, K. A., Korovessis, C., Macdowell, W., Nanchahal, K., Purdon, S., Field, J. (2001), "Sexual behaviour in Britain: Partnerships, Practices, and HIV risk

behaviours", *The Lancet*, 358: 1835-1842 for a discussion of falling rates of marriage from 1990 to 2000.

16 Kakabadse, A., Kakabadse, N. (2004) *Intimacy: International Survey of the Sex Lives of People at Work,* Palgrave.

17 Pease, A., Pease, B. (2004), *The Definitive Book of Body Language,* Orion.

18 Allen, R. (ed) (1993) *Oxford Concise Dictionary,* BCA, p. 1093.

19 Lowndes, N. (2002) *How To Make Anyone Fall In Love With You,* Element. See also, Vitalio, D. (2005) *Seduction Science,* www.seductionscience.com.

20 Based on Vitalio, D. (2005) *Be Your Woman's Hero, not Wuss: Part 1,* internet newsletter 21st April 2005.

21 Special section "How to Attract Men Like Crazy," *Cosmopolitan, February 1989,* article titled "How to Make an Impact on a Man", p. 177. For an extensive discussion of the messages communicated to men about women's values in women's magazine, see Farrell, W. (1986) *Why Men Are The Way They Are,* Bantam Books, Chapter 2 ("What Women Want: The Message the Man Hears"), pp. 24-90. In a wide-ranging discussion of hidden media messages, often focussed on advertising, Farrell illustrates that even in magazines that make claims to be written for 'working' women such as *Ms.*, the majority of adverts are for beauty products (e.g. the ironic "face up to your new responsibilities…beautifully" advertising a new range of cosmetics) or expensive gifts for women that *men* are expected to buy (e.g. "is two months' salary too much to spend for something that lasts a lifetime" accompanying a picture of a man giving a woman a diamond ring). In magazines such as *Working Woman* there were sometimes *no articles* on work. Farrell comments "I assumed *Ms.* would feature other gifts women could give to men….[but] not one full-page ad for one gift a woman could give a man appeared in any *Ms.* Magazine for all nineteen issues – including two Christmas issues.", p. 27.

22 Aronson, E. (2003) *The Social Animal,* Ninth Edition, New York: Worth Publishers, Chapter 8.

23 Berne, E. (1963) *Games People Play,* Penguin. See Chapter 9 for a description of sexual games, including those involving deliberate seduction with malicious intent.

24 Molloy, J. (2003) *Why Men Marry Some Women and Not Others,* Element, pp. 36-38.

[25] Allen, R. (ed.) (1993) *Oxford Concise Dictionary,* BCA, p. 622. All discussion here is based on definitions in this particular dictionary.

[26] See Dalton, M. (1959) *Men Who Manage,* John Wiley & Sons, Chapter 11. Melvin Dalton's "Appendix on Methods" discusses the way that he develops his network of "intimates" in his classic study about management processes.

[27] Willmott, H. (1993), "Strength is ignorance; slavery is freedom: managing culture in modern organisations", *Journal of Management Studies,* 30(4): 515-552.

[28] Peters, T., Waterman, R. H. (1982) *In Search of Excellence,* Profile Books, p. 60.

[29] ibid, p. 238.

[30] Whyte, W. F., Whyte, K. K. (1991) *Making Mondragon*, New York: ILR Press/Ithaca. See also Morrison, R. (1991) *We Build the Road as We Travel*, New Society Publishers. In a non-cooperative context, John Collins describes similar social organisation and results through the surplus sharing arrangements at Nucor – one of 11 'great' companies listed on the US stock exchange.

[31] Kasmir, S. (1996) *The Myth of Mondragon*, State University of New York Press. See also Cheney, G. (1999) *Values at Work*, ILR Press/Cornell University Press.

[32] Petty, R., Cacciopo, J. (1986) "The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion" in L. Berkowitz (ed), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

[33] Aronson, E. (2003) *The Social Animal,* Ninth Edition*,* New York: Worth Publishers.

[34] Lowndes, L. (1996) *How to Make Anyone Fall in Love with You,* London: Element.

[35] Over 15 years I have seen this repeatedly from both sides. As a consultant, I helped organisations purchase new software systems. As a software supplier, if not a preferred supplier, we might decline the tender (if busy) or submit a tender (if trade was slow). Supply/demand, as well as the reputation of the other party, determines the attitude of the *supplier* to the customer as much as the process adopted for procurement. Similar dynamics work in recruitment.

[36] Duberley, E. (2005), *Brief Encounters: A Woman's Guide to Casual Sex,* Fusion Press, p. 135.

37 This claim is rooted in a trade unionist perspective that staff were firstly exploited when the surplus value of their labour was retained (as profits or reserves), then again by the proposals that would leave staff with debts that would have to be paid back out of *future* surplus value.

38 Mintel (2002) *Selling To, and Profiting From, the Sophisticated Consumer, UK – December 2002*, Mintel International Group Ltd. One section in the report reveals that more people now viewed men as the underdogs in advertising. Another identifies viewer responses to different levels of sexual suggestion.

39 "Blond Ambition: Leggy Lawyer Poses, Profits," *ABA Journal,* Vol. 82, p. 12. For further details see Farrell, W. (2005) *Why Men Earn More,* Amacom, Chapter 12.

40 Vitalio, D. (2005) *Recognising When You Are Pussy-Whipped,* Internet newsletter, 12th April 2005.

41 The person had a learning disability, but was a member of the business unit that had produced the best financial results, and lowest wastage, in the company. As a consequence, his work colleagues felt he should be made a permanent member of staff. Diane and John, however, overruled them and he left the company, along with one person who felt so strongly that they publicly criticised the directors for the decision.

42 Internal company document on management culture and philosophy, published and copyrighted in 2000.

43 Ridley-Duff R. J. (2005) *Communitarian Perspectives on Communitarian Governance,* Sheffield Hallam University, Chapter 5., http://www.scribd.com/doc/3271344/. Compared to industry norms and taking into account the qualifications and investment in CIPD trained human resources staff, the level of staff turnover was thought to be at least twice as high, and perhaps as much as four times as high as might normally be expected in a comparable company.

# Chapter 4 - Control and Discipline

## Overview

Children are great teachers, if you listen to them. When I am tired and stressed, I am a useless parent. If my younger daughter, Bethany, marches into the living room and accuses her older sister of hitting her, I will call Natasha into the room, shout at her and send her to her room. Later, I will go to see her, explain that I was tired and stressed, and listen to what she has to say. If she's not too angry with me, she'll tell me and we'll reach an understanding. If not, I just have to live with doing her another injustice.

But when I am not tired and stressed, we deal with Bethany's accusations in a completely different way. I call Natasha into the room and ask her to tell Bethany why she hit her. It usually goes something like this:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Natasha:* | *"You bit me!"* |
| *Bethany:* | *(Looking sheepish at first, but then defiantly). But that was because you called me stupid!* |
| *Daddy:* | *Is that true, Natasha?* |
| *Natasha:* | *Yes – but she is stupid.* |
| *Daddy:* | *I told you to never call her stupid. Why is she stupid this time?* |
| *Natasha:* | *Because she is.* |
| *Daddy:* | *(Exasperated) Bethany, why does Natasha think you are stupid?* |
| *Bethany:* | *I'm not stupid – she's just calling me that because she thinks I laughed at her drawing.* |

*Natasha:* *(Talking to Bethany). That's right - you laughed at my drawing! You made me feel stupid.*

*Bethany:* *I didn't laugh at your drawing. I laughed at your face!*

*Natasha:* *And, then you called me stupid.*

*Daddy:* *Bethany, did you call her stupid?*

*Bethany:* *(Silence)*

*Daddy:* *Bethany?*

*Natasha:* *See! She's always telling lies about me.*

*Bethany:* *I do not – you're always bullying me.*

*Natasha:* *That's because you are stupid.*

*Daddy:* *(Hands in air) Natasha! Stop that.*

*Natasha:* *See – you're always taking her side!*

*Daddy:* *That's not true.*

*Natasha:* *But you do. You always do.*

*Bethany:* *No he doesn't!*

*Daddy:* *Is that what this is about? You think I am taking her side?*

*Natasha:* *(Silence)*

*Bethany:* *He doesn't Tash. He sends me to my room sometimes too.*

*Natasha:* *(Moody silence).*

*Daddy:* *I've got one thing to say to you both.*

*Both:* *(Silence)*

*Daddy:* *(After a pause, and in a thick Yorkshire accent). I don't like gravy….*

*Both:* *(Laughing)*

*Daddy:* *Come here….*

*(Hugs both children).*

The reason little people (kids) are great teachers is that they are pretty useless at hiding their emotions - unless they have already suffered emotional trauma. They show

how they feel and this makes it easier in a dispute to read what is going on. Adults, on the other hand, are practised at "dramaturgical performances" – a phrase coined by Erving Goffman to describe the acting abilities of big people.[1] A more recent phrase that is easier to understand is "deep acting". Adults have had years more experience practising how to conceal their emotions (and had more time to grow afraid of expressing them). Their performances are much more convincing than a child's but are not perfect enough to fool all people all of the time.

Another reason kids are great teachers is that they stay emotionally engaged with the person they are arguing with (at least in my house they do) and do not go off in a huff and refuse to speak to the other person. Adults, I find, withdraw quickly or go silent if someone questions their integrity or values. That makes it much harder to have a conversation like the one above and to trace what triggered feelings of hurt or rejection.

Another way to look at this, however, is to consider the level of intimacy. We have intimate relationships with other family members, and this makes it easier to argue. With people we know less well, it is not possible to argue in the same way (at least, not until an intimate relationship has developed) so the style of disagreeing has to be more diplomatic and subtle.

We are often told that **not** behaving like children is a mark of maturity and "being civilised" but I want to suggest to you that the reverse is closer to the truth. Think back to the opening quote in Chapter 1 of this book: "the meetings would get so violent that people almost went across the table at each other…People yelled…they waved their arms around and pounded on tables…faces would get red and veins bulged out."

This was a description of the behaviour of top executives and technicians in one of the most 'successful' companies of their generation resolving differences over business plans. In Chapter 3, we examined the view that "excellent" companies allowed for, and took advantage of, the most evolved part of our capabilities, namely "the emotional … side (good and bad) of human nature".

Good and bad! Or perhaps, calm and excited, quiet and loud, passive and assertive, reflective and activated.

What these executives have in common with my children is two things:

- They are not frightened of their own emotions
- They are not frightened of other people's emotions

Both are signs of emotional maturity.

Natasha, our first child, was the first of her generation. For two years she was the centre of attention from parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and family friends. Then others in our family had children. Four years later we had our second child, Bethany. The day her younger sister came home from hospital, Natasha told us at the end of the day: "you can take her back now!" We sat down to explain that Bethany would be staying with us, and that the nurses at the hospital were only there to help with the birth.

Gradually, Natasha got less and less attention as the younger ones got more and more. While growing up helped, there are still times when she feels vulnerable because she does not get *all* the attention she used to have. Sometimes, instead of complaining to dad (Rory) or mum (Caroline) she takes her frustrations out on her younger sister. In her more secure moments, she admits this is because it is easier than getting angry with a grown up.

But Bethany, I found, is already a smart cookie herself. It was only when we were old enough to track back events that I realised just how selective Bethany is in truth telling. She does not lie so much as only tell part of the story. To her credit she is an honest soul – if challenged she admits the other side of a story. In our quieter moments, she tells me that the reason she does this is to compensate for being the youngest and smallest. In her words, "I can't ever win". Make a note of this – she is economical with the truth because others are all stronger and she can never win a physical fight. She can, however, sometimes win the verbal fights. If she catches us when

we are tired or stressed, she can sometimes control her older/bigger sister.

The technique we use to resolve arguments owes a debt to Staying OK[2] by Amy and Tom Harris, sequel to the bestseller I'm OK - You're OK[3]. It is a technique called 'trackdown' where you go back over the events that have fuelled an argument until you spot how it started. That way, you can deal with the root cause – emotional hurt caused by perceived exclusion - rather than superficial behaviour that constitutes a reaction to feeling hurt.

Adults, however, often refuse to engage in trackdown because they *want to hide the emotions and thoughts* that drive their behaviour. Sometimes, they may not even be aware of them (which is the value of using trackdown as a diagnostic tool). With Natasha and Bethany – as with most people, whether young or old - the root cause is almost always that one thinks another is getting favourable treatment. This triggers one to attack the other directly (hitting, shouting, verbally abusing) or indirectly (telling tales). In the workplace, physical violence normally results in an immediate sacking, verbally abusing could lead to being disciplined, this leaves tale telling as the principal way for work colleagues to discipline and control each other.

Now here is why children are as emotionally mature as the executives in the opening quotation. They find ways to express, then process, strong emotions while remaining emotionally close to the people with whom they are in dispute. During a decade or so of school, however, children are socialised to repress strong emotions and work in silence to make it easier for teachers to control them. The workplace has no need of such tight controls because workers are not in a one-way learning environment with a 30:1 ratio between teacher and learner. This makes school-like disciplines particularly ineffective. A much better approach is to bend and flex so that expressions of emotion are not only permitted, but point the way toward mutual understanding and the pleasures of making up after an argument.

This is not a recipe for mayhem – I am not suggesting that people allow others to "get away" with being abusive, rather that we understand abusive behaviour as a product or reaction to earlier (and perhaps more subtle) attempts at social exclusion. A practical approach is *emotional mirroring* – the same technique, but extended to disputes, that body language experts call *rapport building*.[4] If someone starts to raise their voice, raise yours until they stop raising theirs, then stop raising yours. If someone starts to take the moral high ground, respond with moral arguments of your own until they drop their approach, then drop yours. The aim – as with seduction – is equity and reciprocity. Yes – I know that this is all easier said than done, and that those with good verbal skills will have an unfair advantage!

## Why Control and Discipline?

I have heard a variation on the "sometimes you have to discipline someone…." argument so many times that, frankly, I'm rather tired of hearing it. Yes, sometimes we have to act on our own feelings and intervene into a situation where we feel an injustice is taking place, but this is not necessarily the same as disciplining someone. At the same time, it is unwise to intervene until *we understand our own motives* for intervening. Often we intervene more for ourselves than others.

When this happens, we can make the situation worse rather than better. One benefit of studying the workplace as an anthropologist (rather than, for example, as an experimental psychologist), is that you can use 'trackdown' to unravel conflicts that do not seem to make any sense. You also get to see both sides of a situation more of the time.

In this chapter, I tell two stories where trackdown was applied during an anthropological study. The first shows the social tensions that led up to an incident in which Brenda disciplined Ben. In doing this, we start to unravel a second source of tension that stemmed *from* the disciplining of other workers. The two sets of tensions are

linked in a most unusual way and through the telling of these stories the dynamics of social control and discipline are exposed.

Let me first, however, put a proposition to you. Based on the last chapter, I contend there are four contexts that fuel attempts to control and discipline others:

- When a relationship is so intimate we are sure an argument will not do long-term damage to the relationship.
- When we feel there is no viable option to exit the relationship (i.e. the relationship will continue whatever we say or do).
- When we have no interest (or lose interest) in developing an intimate relationship.
- When we discover that another has no interest in pursuing a more intimate relationship.

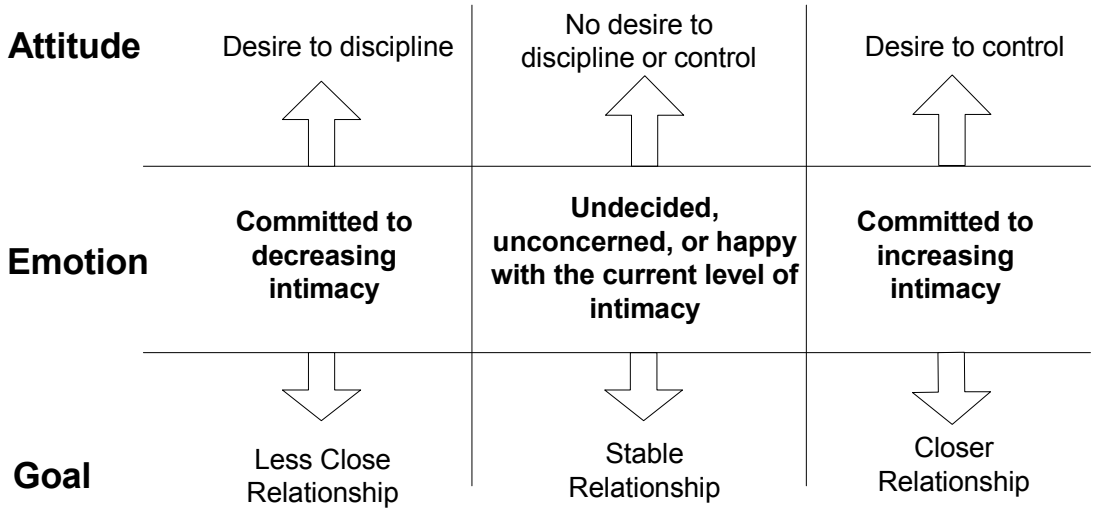
Contexts 1 and 2 are closely related, although the situations in which they occur might be quite different. They are similar because the expectation is that the relationship will continue whatever our behaviour. The result is that we have to accept all the emotions of the other party (both good and bad), and allow for them. Contexts 3 and 4 are also closely related because they are the flip side of each other.

Context 1 could be a marriage or other committed relationship. Context 2 could be a relationship between prisoners and prison guards, or prisoners of war and the soldiers guarding them. Context 3 might be work colleagues where one party discovers that the other party will not (or cannot) develop an intimate relationship, or where one party wishes to stop an intimate relationship developing.

Diagrammatically, this can be represented as shown in Figure 3. In between two extremes (decreasing intimacy – increasing intimacy) are relationships where parties are undecided about the level of intimacy they desire. They may not yet know enough about the other party to make a firm decision about the future of the relationship, or have

become undecided because something has triggered emotional hurt.

**Figure 3 – Attitudes, Emotions and Social Goals**




Caroline and I had a period of few years back when we grew closer to people at work. As this happened, we started to move across all three parts of the diagram at home and our feelings for each other became volatile. As we were drawn into emotional relationships with others, we experienced a range of reactions at home. As workplace relationships became volatile, we grew closer at home. At other times, however, we started disciplining each other (avoiding intimacy) to make more time and space for others.

The one left out in the cold, so to speak, sometimes felt ignored and reacted by trying to increase intimacy again. This manifests itself in attempts to regain 'control' over the relationship. As we got used to each others' new relationships, however, the desire to discipline and control lessened and we re-established a "stable relationship" that became incrementally closer and closer again.

Think of your own relationships? Who do you find it easy to get angry with? Why? Do you ever get angry with someone who is not the source of your problem? Why can you not get angry with the 'correct' person? Do you need the relationship? Can you end it? Now think of someone who gets angry with you? Why are they able to? How do you feel afterwards? Do you enjoy making up or does it cause hours, days, or weeks of pain?

Social psychologists frequently draw attention to the finding that people argue most with those they are (or have been) closest to. If they can make-up after an argument, their relationships grow stronger. If they can't, their relationships weaken. Has this been true in your case?

## Threats to Equity and Reciprocity

Equity theory is rooted in the idea that we are always seeking to arrange our lives so that all our social interactions with others are equitable.[5] This is by no means easy and is always subject to change because the desires of others, and their behaviours, are beyond our control. During periods we are undecided about levels of intimacy (i.e. when relationships are forming and developing, or we are unsure of our future commitment to someone), then the relationship – at least from our own point of view - is stable. Others, however, may feel differently if they have made an emotional commitment to increase or decrease their level of intimacy with us.

One advantage of the above model is that *it reveals the hypocrisy behind many attempts at "moral" behaviour*. Our behaviour is only genuinely moral if we are in "stable relationship" situations with all the other parties, or are self-aware of the outcomes we are seeking. This does not mean there has to be no economic or emotional relationship, only that we are unconcerned (or self-aware) of the likely impacts of any intervention we make.

If we are not self-aware, then the desire to seek a less close relationship (because we have been hurt) or a closer relationship (because we are dependant) means that any

*moral* positions adopted to discipline or control the other are usually hypocritical. This is a particularly difficult problem in disputes involving senior people at work who have a large emotional and financial investment in protecting their own position. It is also problematic where one party is extremely emotionally or financially dependant on another.

To explore this issue, come with me on another journey into the lives of Brenda, Ben, Diane, Harry, John and Irene[6].

## Stories of Discipline and Control

Brenda is in her late thirties. She was once married, but realised that she had been too young and married for the wrong reasons. She divorced quickly, then took advantage of an opportunity to travel. Her intellectual and emotional resilience is shown by her reaction to being arrested in Eastern Europe with three friends. She called the British Embassy who advised her that they may have broken a local law, or may have been detained simply to extort money. Brenda, sure they were being detained for the latter reason, plucked up the courage to ask the police "how much?" After some negotiations, they paid the police off and were allowed to leave the country.

Committed to her career, Brenda joined the company after forming a personal friendship with John. She has no boyfriend or children, but regularly visits family and friends at weekends. Others in the company – particularly women – say behind her back that she should "get a life", but Brenda says she is content to develop her career. Her friends point out that she likes to "party hard" when she gets the chance.

Ben, slightly younger, has struggled with medical problems during his early life. Often in hospital, he found adjusting to "normal" life difficult and was bullied until adulthood, when – in his own words – he became a "bad boy". At university, Ben discovered his intellectual gifts, and also his ability to develop close (and sometimes sexual) relationships with women. His willingness to listen added to his attractiveness, but also created complications in the way he handled friendships. This put severe strain on a six-year 'steady' relationship with his girlfriend. After a period of sickness, he returned to work enthusiastic and committed. While he says he deserves his reputation as a womaniser, I detected another side in which he talked about his desire for a stable committed relationship with one woman.

**Erving Goffman's work in the early 1960s is a landmark in understanding how and why people say different things in different contexts. His work on how people present themselves, almost as if they were acting a variety of roles, reveals the care and attention to detail that both the "actor" and the audience take into account in deciding whether to believe someone.**

**Paul Griseri in a much less well know book, tackles the question of ambiguity. He claims that most people do not know their own values, let alone anyone else's, hence the constant contradictions that surface when we observe the same people in different contexts. To a greater or lesser extent, we are all "economical with the truth". Another way to consider this is that we are all highly selective regarding the information we give and withhold in order to protect ourselves.**

Diane is a twice married mother of two whose second marriage, while stable, is unexciting. Now in her forties, she has developed a wide circle of female friends and is well regarded by both men and women at work for her sensitivity. Her sexual passion, however, sometimes surfaces on nights out. Her fondness for John is apparent - once she flirted all evening with him and played sexual jokes (putting ice cubes down his trousers). She once admitted she practised her kissing skills with female friends and enjoyed getting "frenchies" as birthday presents from men at work. Outside work, she devotes herself completely to her children.

Harry is in his early 40s, a successful entrepreneur who first made money buying up end-of-line football shirts at rock bottom prices. He would look for a top

team changing their strip, then fly to America to sell at a 1000% mark-up. Harry wants to build robust communities through business ("I've never done anything just for the money"), but at other times admits he is financially driven ("I won't do anything that does not improve the bottom line"). A committed environmentalist, he is particularly good at improving his own bottom line. Well loved by his staff, and particularly by the women, his marriage is "deeply loving, but not straightforward". Separation was once discussed, but now is "not an option" because he has two children. Comfortable in large groups of people, Harry might be found at the centre of a knees up. In private, however, he is more guarded and is uncomfortable with intimacy (a word he equates with 'sex').

John, in his late 30s, is a private figure, both feared and liked in equal measure. Something of an academic, he is extremely laid-back and relaxed about life, takes on challenges that other people avoid, and is driven continually to learn new things. He has three other jobs besides his directorship: firstly, relationship counselling; secondly acting as a mentor to business executives; thirdly, as an examiner. After a series of infidelities, he has one marriage behind him, but remains on good terms with his ex-wife and children. He likes running, but after injuries he started taking regular visits to a therapist with whom he later started a romance.

Irene is a large woman who has worked at the company for seven years. In her own words, she "tries to do the best job possible" but her peers tease her because of her size and appearance. Managers receive complaints from her work colleagues and she has a reputation amongst senior staff for being "difficult and inflexible". Intellectually bright and hardworking, she remains enthusiastic about her job tasks and is particularly kind to newcomers. When I first joined – without asking – she went through her work files to find old newsletters. Others reported that she helps new starters with the questions others won't answer, such as the location of the toilets, cloakrooms, showers, mugs etc. Why? Because she still remembers how daunting it was on her first day. More recently, however, she has been treated for

depression and been off work. Her return creates problems when she tries to talk about past disputes. Eventually managers decide she must "move on" or leave the company.

## Hearing the Characters Speak for Themselves

In Chapter 3, we heard Ben talk about his relationship with Hayley. We got to know John through his correspondence with me. Let us now hear the others speak for themselves:

Harry says that Brenda "dotted and crossed Is and Ts" all the time. We can see this side of Brenda's character in the way she talks about a company day out.

> *It was no small feat arranging a day out of this magnitude, but we did it and we did it in style. From coaches, aeroplanes, water taxis and gondolas: no modes of transport were missed; no passports/tickets/passengers lost; not even anyone held up at customs (although there were a few near misses just to add to the excitement of the day!)….A massive wave of appreciation has to go out to the main organiser of this tumultuous event – Diane.*

Brenda claims commitments to the 'community' ideals of the organisation, but both John and Ben noted her opposition to principles of democracy, and a liking for hierarchy. In private emails she displays this side of her character by circulating humour about employees:

> *Re: New Employee Rules!!*
>
> *Something to think about for new statement of employment for 04 or any future employee questionnaires?!*
>
> *----- Forwarded Message ------*
>
> *SICK DAYS*
>
> *We will no longer accept a doctor's sick note as proof of sickness. If you are able to get to the doctors, you are able to come into work.*

*SURGERY*

*Operations are now banned. As long as you are an employee here, you need all your organs. To have something removed constitutes a breach of employment.*

*BEREAVEMENT LEAVE*

*This is no excuse for missing work. There is nothing you can do for dead friends or relatives. Every effort should be made to have non-employees to attend to the arrangements…*

*ABSENT FOR YOUR OWN DEATH*

*This will be accepted as an excuse. However, we require at least two weeks notice, as it is your duty to train your own replacement.*

*DRESS CODE*

*It is advised that you come to work dressed according to your salary. If we see you wearing fancy trainers or clothing we will assume that you are doing well financially and therefore do not need a pay rise.*

*We are here to provide a positive employment experience. Therefore, all questions, comments, concerns, complaints… accusations, or input should be directed elsewhere.*

*HAVE A NICE DAY - The Management*

Brenda called Harry the company's "idealist" and John the "pragmatist". We can see the idealist side of Harry's character in the way he talks about the day out organised by Diane:

*I had this surreal dream. Instead of travelling to work I dreamt that I got on an aeroplane full of really good people (although I seemed to make some of them cry) and we flew off to this sun-drenched island with liquid streets and beautiful buildings. We travelled around on these really long boats with curly ends and very handsome men (so the girls said) serenading us whilst they poked long sticks into the water. None of them caught any fish though. Even the*

*pigeons were amazing. They filled the streets and the skies but never once did they s**t on anyone's head.*

Harry's inhibitions (or sensitivity, depending on your interpretation) is conveyed in the way he does not even spell out the work 'shit' in the company newsletter.

## Brenda and Ben on Each Other

Brenda and Ben had some ups and downs in their relationship. In a work capacity, Ben found Brenda somewhat brusque.

*I arranged to go in early to do some training for them, before the managers and directors meeting. It didn't work out like that, however. I was fed up that I'd arranged to come in early to do the training and I'd spent several hours preparing a quick guide to using the system. I'd asked for this meeting to ensure I could go to our next department meeting and show some progress, but the moment Harry put his face through the window, she went out. She treated him 'as the MD' and was in his power. He just had to say 'come on' and that was it. We had arranged this meeting to give her training and timed it so that she would still have a half-hour window to prepare for her meeting with Harry. She didn't even apologise.*

Brenda sometimes found Ben's manner difficult, and seemed particularly concerned to stop him developing relationships with women. Here is how she once communicated her feelings to him regarding his relationship with Hayley.

*I appreciate your response, but it does illustrate the difficulties of separating personal and professional issues, which I can fully appreciate was even less clear for you during that time…..Surely this confirms how personal and professional boundaries had been crossed in your role here?*

At other times, however, Brenda is (over) friendly towards Ben. In the following email, after Ben apologised for talking about pay issues in the staff canteen, she comes across as upbeat and informal:

*It is incredibly challenging to be totally appropriate all of the time in such an open arena. A deeper discussion on this topic would evoke some 'interesting' thoughts I'm sure: I would be more than happy to put it on the list, (of which I have already subliminally created) to discuss! We just don't seem to make time for more in-depth discussion on these quite significant issues, so maybe we should diarise? At least we've managed to arrange a 'social' before Hayley leaves. I have got a card (for you to sign) and present (very pink and bubbly!!) It should be an eventful evening and well overdue!*

In private, Brenda advised Ben that he should "be prepared for a lot of attention" at Hayley's leaving party. What precisely she meant by this was unclear to myself and Ben, but some interesting dynamics between Ben, Brenda and Diane emerge at the conclusion of Hayley's leaving party. As Ben reports:

*It was the small hours. We were going to go back to Brenda's to open a bottle of whiskey but Diane said she was too tired and wanted to go home. The whole evening unfolded how I like it.....good meal, good company, lots of chat, and as the evening winds down round a table, everyone drunk, talking about how you feel, talking to each other in ways that you don't talk in the workplace when you feel inhibited.*

*We had a coffee and talked on a much more personal level. Diane said again that I have some "admirers". I asked if she'd tell me but she wouldn't. She explained that this was part of the way the Data Protection Act worked, that if she told me and something happened that she could be personally liable. I said that I wanted to have a period on my own but that I don't want to turn down the chance of any interesting friendships.*

Shortly afterwards, in response to Brenda's suggestion that they have a 'more in-depth discussion' Ben invited Brenda to join John and himself at the pub after work. As a consequence, a new "complication" took shape.

*Brenda. (Pause). The barriers have definitely come down ... I have one or two worries about an email I sent. We have been open and complimentary. I said that I found her very sharp and thrive on the feedback she gives. She said that she was "so pleased" that I had come back to the company…I can't generalise. I sent an email because we are building up a clutch of things that it would be good to discuss outside work, so I said that maybe it is the time to go down the pub with John. But Brenda, the next day, seemed glowing with excitement. I think she was flattered by my invitation. She came in wearing a low-cut top and I think she's trying to flirt with me. She's smiling much more at me. Staring at me. Oh God!*

*When I reflect about things, about the way she was very complimentary at Hayley's leaving party, being very open, and standing close up, I just.....(pause)....well, she has my respect but I don't fancy her. I hope that.....I hope....this might sound crazy but this is affecting me because I don't know how to go into work now. It bothers me because I don't want a complicated relationship with my director.*

The next time Brenda arranged a team meeting with Ben and Diane, she suggested that they have a walk in the park, then a meeting, then go out for a meal, then go back to her place for drinks. Ben felt this sounded more like a date than a working meeting and asked Brenda if they should open the evening to the whole department (about 20 people). Brenda reacted by saying she wanted to "keep it small".

Diane also took an interest in Ben's situation. Below is her reaction after Ben came into work upset:

*That morning I went into work. Both Diane and Hayley could see I was upset. Diane was very supporting and comforting. She held my hand and gave me a hug. She gave me her home number and said I could kip at their place if I needed to.*

*I'm not sure how we got onto the subject, but now my situation is known, she asked me some questions about how I felt. I said that I expected to have a period on my*

*own - I'd been like that before - and Diane said something similar to Hayley's comment that "I wouldn't be lonely" (Pause…as if trying to work something out)…. in fact she said that to me at the pub the other week - but she fleshed it out a bit this time, which was that people had been asking about me, about whether I was married, or had children. I didn't ask her any details at that time, but I found it reassuring.*

Later, however, Diane reacted strangely to Ben after he told her that he was corresponding with someone on the Internet. As Ben comments:

*It made me think back over my own behaviour. I can't understand why she would say "look, you are not going to find love here". I liked people but did not generally make comments to them or about them. It made me self-conscious and I felt vulnerable. Another man has been sacked for comments he'd made about women's attractiveness and I'm now worried that I've made a couple of comments in response to Diane saying that I have admirers.*

Ben took Diane up on this by email and asked whether his domestic situation had been discussed with others. Diane responded:

*My comment on your not finding love here was because I felt you were making a conscious effort to seek out a relationship and I was worried about the possibility of your privileged access to files being used in an inappropriate way. When I said that people were asking about you it was in a general way, as people do when there is a new person around. A small group of people, male female and a mixed age group, were curious to know more about you i.e. your age, marital status and did you have any family. Can you forgive me?*

Ben explained his feelings in the following terms.

*…some people made me feel nervous and there were others whose interest I liked. I wanted to choose my response from a position of knowledge - that was all. …I think I was looking for an intimate friendship, rather than a (sexual)*

*relationship - certainly I have always found most comfort talking to close female friends… There was one person I particularly liked (who I thought was showing interest in me) so I did drop a private note to them but they did not respond and I did not feel like pursuing it. I feel closer to you than anyone else at work - you are my best friend – there is nothing to forgive. Would you like a drink soon?*

Upon discovering that Ben had invited another woman out for a drink, Diane – apparently so concerned that it was "affecting her performance" - showed Brenda the above email. The result was a face-to-face meeting in which Brenda took Ben to task:

*Brenda: I don't want to be moral Ben but you were in a committed relationship.*

*Ben: I don't understand, why is that relevant - I was separating....*

*Brenda: You are asking someone out for a drink - don't you think you should have discussed this with someone first?*

*Ben: There was nothing to discuss!*

*Brenda: It is not that you asked her, it is the way that you did it?*

*Ben: But I also asked you, sent you an email and you did not respond.*

*Brenda: But you sent her a note?*

*Ben: But that was the only way I could contact her – she's not on email. Besides, I also sent a card to a man asking him for a drink and followed it up several times before he agreed.*

*Brenda: But that's different!*

Ben did not think it was different – he liked both people and asked them out in a similar way. After the meeting, Brenda's response was swift and firm:

*I don't feel that there needs to be any further analysis. What is required from you Ben, is an acknowledgement that considering your role, you did over-step the mark professionally and you recognise this for the future. We all have to take responsibility for our actions and this is no exception. Hopefully upon your acknowledgement, we can draw a line under this, but if you feel that I am being in any way unfair, then we shall discuss further how to progress this serious matter.*

Ben felt Brenda was being unfair and suggested Brenda's attitude was sexist. Brenda responded by threatening to raise the matter with Harry if Ben did not accept his "error". Ben then responded as follows:

*What is materially different from the invitation I sent to her and the invitation I sent to you? Are you saying that because of my role, that I cannot choose who I have drinks with? The question that keeps going through my mind is why are you making an issue of this? This incident, in particular, seems fabricated to make an issue out of nothing. I don't like that.*

The question 'why' is critical. Why did Brenda, in Harry's words, "want Ben's head on a spike" simply for inviting someone for a drink? The following conversation was reconstructed from handwritten notes made by the woman who later became Ben's new girlfriend. It reveals that Ben was aware that Brenda may have been feeling hurt.

*Brenda: How are you?*

*Ben: Not good, I'm afraid.*

*Brenda: Ben, I'd like to get Harry involved. Do you consent to that?*

*Ben: I would rather you explained your behaviour in an email as I've done to you. Can you do it in writing?*

*Brenda: Well, I'd rather get Harry involved. Do you not want that?*

*Ben: I think it may not be in your interests Brenda, but if you'd like to do that then I guess I would consent to it.*

*Brenda: What do you mean that it may not be in my interests?*

*Ben: I think I'd rather not elaborate.*

*Brenda: I don't understand.*

*Ben: I think I may have hurt your feelings and that this is driving your behaviour.*

With Ben's consent, the issue was escalated to Harry who proceeded to discipline both of them. He would not, however, countenance Ben's interpretation that Brenda was acting from personal jealousy. As Harry wrote to Ben:

*I question your assessment of Brenda's motives in raising the drink issue with you. You should recall from earlier discussions around this topic that Brenda only raised the issue with you following consultation with myself (after she had been made aware via Diane). This fact does not fit at all comfortably with your view of 'a woman scorned bent on a revenge mission'.*

Harry, however, does not consider that he has been used - just as Bethany sometimes uses me to discipline her sister - like a parent. Brenda selectively fed Harry information so that he would support the decision to discipline (or control) Ben's behaviour. Secondly, Brenda enlisted Harry's support **before** she spoke to Ben, or began her attempts to discipline him. Eventually, the following outcome occurred:

*Ben claims he was pulled to one side and told his behaviour was "unprofessional". He was asked not to date anyone in the company. Ben said that this was unreasonable – that what he did in his own time was his own business. He was then told by Brenda that he would not go anywhere in the company if he dated people – basically the message was "if you have relationships with people here, you are not going to get promoted."*

This was a double-standard. Harry himself was married to a woman with whom he had first conducted a workplace affair at Custom Products. Later, he promoted her to company director. It is this kind of hypocrisy that alienates workers.

## Feelings and Motives During Disciplining

I asked Ben to keep a diary during his dispute – one of the reasons that such insights into his conflict with Brenda became possible. Afterwards, Ben had to move to a different department and had little contact with Brenda. He felt – with some justification – that the "truth" had been twisted to protect Diane and Brenda from criticism.

**The propensity of people to construct "truth" in the light of their current interests is a theme in both political theory and philosophy.**

**Habermas's work has been widely quoted in this respect. He argued that each situation influences a person's ability to tell the truth – that being in the presence of a manager inhibits talking because of the impact of authority.**

**My colleague Minna Leinonen, however, who followed Habermas's guidelines during gender research still found that people "painstakingly avoided gender conflict" even in groups where they did not know others. Clearly "authority" is not the only inhibitor.**

**Different social processes take place in every context and people are – in the words of Professor David Megginson "always measuring the distance between themselves and others to determine what is sayable."**

**Habermas's work has been important in drawing attention to the way that a person's interests affects the perspective they adopt during a discussion.**

He wrote about his meeting with Brenda in the following terms:

*The attack was not physical; it was psychological. The invasion into my private life, forcing me to relive and open up events that took place when I separated from my girlfriend (putting a new relationship at risk), and making me account for my sexual attitudes and behaviour (over an after work drink invitation?) felt like "psychological rape".*

It is not just junior staff, however, who are upset by disputes. When Ben would not accept his 'error', Harry also started to get defensive about his behaviour and accused Ben of pursuing a 'vendetta':

*How can you justify your claims? Are you now dismissing the process that we painstakingly went through? Have you forgotten the criticism made regarding Brenda's handling of the dispute? What motivation would I have, to offer blind support to someone if they were acting so blatantly against the best interests of the organisation? If I took such a narrow perspective, how would I maintain the levels of support within the company?*

*How can you possibly justify circulating your flawed account in the knowledge that it presents such an incomplete interpretation of events? The only conclusion I can reach in questioning your motives for taking this course of action is that you were attempting to bolster your increasingly untenable position in respect of your allegations against Brenda.*

It may, of course, be that Harry's account is 'flawed' and that his interpretation is 'untenable'. Let us consider this in a bit more detail and consider the pressures on Harry.

## Diane's Motives

Diane – after the event – felt that Ben misinterpreted her comments about "admirers". Ben's account, however, was recorded at the time Diane made her comments (many months earlier). This raises the possibility that Diane had a good reason for reconstructing her original comments. Certainly she has an incentive to do so, because her position within the company requires her to be extremely discrete. As she recognises herself – indiscretion can lead to prosecution under the Data Protection Act.

Her discretion regarding women's comments towards Ben, however, can be contrasted with her indiscretion regarding Ben's emails and the way she told other women about Ben's personal circumstances. The emails were sent in confidence but were shown to the one person that Ben requested Diane should <u>not</u> show them to - Brenda. This suggests that the Data Protection Act is not the real reason Diane does not wish to divulge information to Ben,

and is being used by her as a 'legitimate' excuse to avoid talking.

There are several ways to interpret this. Firstly, Diane's dependence on Brenda (or wish to maintain friendship) is so great that in this context the Data Protection Act is meaningless. Alternatively, we can interpret her behaviour from the gendered perspective that we are socialised to protect women[7]. She gives personal information to women who ask about Ben so that they can decide whether to approach him, but will not give Ben similar information so that he can decide whether to approach them. Why? Are the women in more 'danger' from Ben that Ben is from the women? Lastly, there is a simple explanation. Diane was enjoying Ben's attention and did not want it to be diverted elsewhere. Her motivation may have been less to do with the protection of other women than competition with them - to keep Ben's attention for herself while hiding her feelings.

## Brenda's Motives

Brenda constructs Ben's behaviour as "unprofessional" because of the sensitivity of his position and personal circumstances. However, she attempts to arrange meetings with him that could be constructed as "unprofessional" in their own right, then denies to both Harry and Ben that she had motives of personal jealousy. Ben's dependence on Brenda made it difficult for him to speak up, but when Harry finally heard a full version of Ben's story, he suggests that Ben was imagining things and calls his allegations "untenable". How likely is this?

Brenda's decision to seek and divulge information exchanged in confidence raises questions about her own morality and motives. Later she asked for Ben's consent, and he gave it, but she had already consulted Harry beforehand. The incident shows that managers do not always feel able to respect confidences. The impression given to Ben by Diane, however, was that Brenda **sought** the information even after Diane informed her that Ben had requested confidentiality. Diane indicated that she did not volunteer it willingly. This suggests that Brenda

and Diane both faced moral dilemmas. They had to decide who to be loyal to, who to help, who to protect. How credible is Harry's claim that Brenda had "no choice" but to act on the information "given" to her? Was she seeking to discipline Ben? If so, why?

## Harry's Motives

I offered Harry access to research data to corroborate Ben's account but Harry declined and chose to accept Brenda's and Diane's verbal accounts. Why would Harry do this? Firstly, it is possible that Ben's account was so incongruous with Harry's beliefs about Brenda (and perhaps women in general) that he could not bring himself to investigate properly. He had his own ideal of what women should be, and could be. Maybe Ben's opinions created more emotional turmoil than Harry could process. Could Harry cope with the idea that women can be equally responsible for sexist and sexual behaviour in the workplace?

There are other ways to look at this, however. We can see Harry's behaviour as patriarchal. In all instances, even if he criticises women, he still *acts* as if he believes their accounts and disbelieves the men's. He may believe that whatever the rights and wrong, his priority is to protect the women. Ben, on account of the company's equal opportunity commitments, expected relationships (and dispute resolution) to be based on equality of responsibility and accountability. In raising issues, however, he violated the social norm that "both sexes … protect the female"[8]. This is – by all accounts – classic patriarchal behaviour. But is it an expression of "male power"? I am sceptical.

This claim rests on an evaluative position that men's interests are being served. Whose interests are served by Harry's dominant behaviour? It is questionable whether Harry's or Ben's long-term interests are being served here. We can regard Harry as serving Brenda's interest at least as much as his own. The speed with which Brenda escalated the conflict to Harry and sought Harry's support at the earliest opportunity are expressions of *matriarchal* power. Once Harry has given his support, it is difficult for

him to withdraw it without damaging his relationship with Brenda. Even as Harry criticises Brenda for her handling of the situation, he does her bidding and fights her battle. This is at her instigation not his: Harry's "power" is co-opted by Brenda to discipline Ben.

### Ben's Motives

Ben's version of the truth can also be challenged. He acts to protect his friendships and personal interests. Because he did not place his loyalties to his departmental colleagues above all others, they rejected him. His "truth" was driven by a desire to have control over a much broader set of relationships. At the time of the dispute, he wanted to retain *the option* to respond positively if someone he liked gave him attention. Was his behaviour (as Harry claims) part of a "crusade" or (as Ben claims) a "question of principle"?

Ben's account has fewer contradictions than others. Firstly – unlike Brenda and Diane – he was willing to discuss what happened. He *knowingly* acts against his own social and material interests (particularly when short-term outcomes are considered) and does not escalate the conflict with Brenda until she characterises his behaviour as a "serious matter". Whether he is seeking conflict or challenging a false allegation rests on whose accounts are more believable. He admitted an attraction, and enjoyment at flirting, but did he conceal a deeper intention? Even if he did, does this justify Diane's, Brenda's and Harry's reaction? Why was it so important for them to intervene and control Ben while at the same time protecting Diane?

## Learning from Conflict

During my school years, one of the English course set texts was called *Joseph Andrews*. It was a bawdy comedy, and regularly ridiculed social hypocrisy and the petty reasons for disciplining. In one scene, a man is brought to court for 'stealing' a twig that he allegedly broke off his landlord's tree. Even though the court

decided that the twig was worth "less that sixpence", the man is found guilty and sentenced as a thief.

The reason that text made such an impression on me was the way that completely unimportant and trivial misdemeanours get escalated into huge dramas for the purposes of 'putting someone in their place'. The event on which the conflict between Ben and Brenda turned is similar. Ben invited someone for a drink. No actual drink took place. No-one complained about the drink invitation. There was no 'relationship' taking place. Ben claims he made the invitation for two reasons: firstly, a woman he found interesting was showing interest in him; secondly, he did not know why. With hindsight, the basis of this dispute is unimaginably petty, but an exploration the emotional purposes of the conflict provides a better understanding.

What seems clear – particularly if we think of the tensions between Ben and Brenda described earlier - is that Brenda's attitude changed towards Ben as a result of learning about the drink invitation. Her desires changed and it became functional for her to distance herself from Ben. Disciplining him (whether consciously realised or not) reintroduces formality after she had been repeatedly informal with him (i.e. flirting with him and inviting him to walk in the park, and drink whiskey at her house).

During the process of disciplining, the demand is for one-way intimacy, rather than two-way. The subordinate, Ben, is required to be "open and honest" while Brenda is permitted to lie in order to construct a truth that satisfies Harry. The "superior" learns about the "subordinate" (to construct their own case) while the "subordinate" is not allowed the question the "superior", or is immediately criticised and censored for doing so. The truth gets sacrificed to construct an account that is satisfactory to those with decision-making power.

This example, if any were needed, illustrates how regimes that rely on formal hierarchy (line management) and discipline are not an adequate arrangement for a society with democratic aspirations (or even economic ones!). In a democracy, the process would work both ways – the motives of the accuser would be subject to as much scrutiny by a peer group as the motives of the

accused. The goal of inquiry would be to generate understanding (to bring about *self*-discipline) rather than to judge 'guilt'.

## The Impacts of Disciplining

Ben lost 9lbs (4kg) in five days during this dispute and got no more than 2 hours of sleep per night until he had worked things out in his head. In other disputes, involving women, similar loss of weight was reported. A salesperson called Tanya claims she lost over 1 stone in weight (6kg) after a dispute with John, and that the anxiety lived with her "every day". Only her fondness for Harry, and financial dependency, induced her to stay.

The emotions reported by Ben were not unique. Below is a selection of other comments:

*The way they have gone about invading peoples' minds is disgraceful. Harry has reduced me to tears before and knows how insecure I feel. He bollocked me for sharing my feelings and now I shake before I go into meetings.*

*Tanya (saleswoman)*

*I know how I will be characterised - it started some time back. I've already been told I'm "losing the plot", "emotionally distraught" and that I "do not accept the 'errors' I've made". He makes me feel like a naughty schoolchild if I try to say anything.*

*Terry (former salesman)*

*On the face of it the workplace is excellent, but stress leads people to be off sick. Work has been a factor in people going off. I could not say it was the sole reason, or even the biggest factor, but relationship problems arise because of work. Sometimes you have to work additional hours week-in week-out because you dare not say 'no'. You have to choose between work and relationships and that is detrimental to your whole life.*

*Anonymous (the informant did not wish to be identified)*

*Harry will ask people if everything is alright, and in the back of their minds they'll be wanting to say no, but they'll say 'yes' to avoid getting bollocked by Brenda. If you raise any issues, then the next thing you know Brenda will say 'I want to see you'. There is instant fear. I once got summoned to a police station and I was afraid all day long. When Brenda says 'I want to see you' it feels the same. There is an in-built fear.*

*Anonymous (the informant did not wish to be identified)*

The impacts are different, however, when the recipient feels criticism is justified. There are cases of Brenda disciplining Ben where he felt she was right to do so, and this caused him no stress at all. He gave quick and clear apologies in these instances. What had such an impact on his emotions in this instance was his perception that Brenda was making both a false and hypocritical allegation.

Think of the last time you felt disciplined or controlled. Was there a positive outcome? Did someone else calling you to account eventually do you good? Did it reduce trust in the relationship? If yes, why? If no, why? Do you feel that others are entitled to question the way you do your work? Or do you feel that such questioning is unhelpful? Does it increase or decrease your respect for another?

## Social Influence During Conflict

Emotional desires and commitments provide a compelling way of understanding how disputes begin, develop and are concluded. There are five types of relationships that impact on the course of a dispute:

- formal networks (e.g. departmental colleagues)
- informal networks (i.e. friends inside/outside work)
- family networks (particularly spouses/partners)

- relationships with leaders (i.e. line managers and human resource staff)
- regulators (i.e. lawyers, unions, advisers, legal bodies etc.).

We choose our words carefully, even to our closest friends, based on the impact and likelihood that they will be repeated to people in other parts of a social network. When we have no personal life to protect, we accord more importance to our relationships with leaders and legal bodies (the enablers and threats to achieving our social goals). But when we have families, or a strong commitment to friends and colleagues at work, these can become more important. The principal factor in our behaviour is the route we take to maintain our emotional health and self-image. We generally defend the relationships that ensure our safety and sacrifice those we can do without.

**Figure 4 – Relationships Influencing Dispute Process**

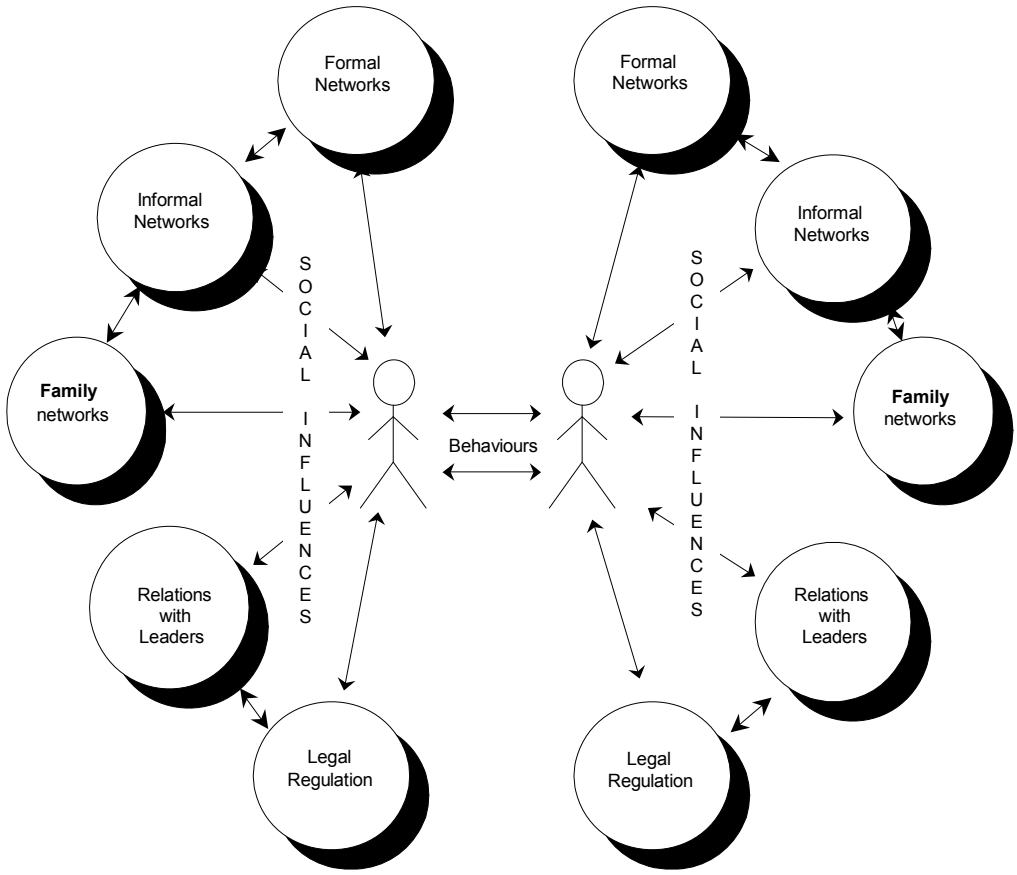


Figure 4 illustrates the pressures that can build during a dispute. Different parties place different emphases on the value of particular relationships. Leaders may place a higher priority on acting within the law than preserving relationships with one or more other parties. In the terms described in Figure 3 (at the start of the chapter) this is an attempt to maintain a "stable relationship" with people inside legal bodies, while developing "less close" relationships with an employee (or group of employees).

It is perverse that the law has the effect of breaking up or undermining organisations, but this is the outcome when fear of (or obedience to) law is given a higher priority than the preservation of other relationships. As Diane's story illustrates, however, the law is sometimes used as a ruse (or excuse) to hide feelings from others in order to protect our social position.

## A Second Case

By looking at a second aspect of the relationship between Brenda and Ben, I uncovered the long-term dynamics of disciplining and sacking people.

Let us take a closer look at Irene's situation in the company. When Ben first talked about her, this was his description:

> *Irene is a most interesting figure. From the way she talks you would think that the company values do not matter to her much, but from the way she acts she is a model employee: committed, friendly, highly flexible, loyal, enthusiastic, conscientious and hard working. She is a loner within the company - amongst existing employees - but likes to help new starters feel at home.*

Ben liked her. When I spoke to Brenda, however, she revealed a problematic relationship with Irene:

> *To my surprise Brenda revealed that Irene refuses to attend social events organised by the company. They attempted to reach a compromise, but Irene apparently refused to do this. Brenda had to deal with many issues - she felt that Irene was choosing to exclude herself, rather than the company excluding her. There were issues of competence*

*and attitude (John also said this in an earlier discussion) and Irene's colleagues had raised issues. Brenda said that in many ways, Irene showed what was good about the company, but she had become so inflexible that there were now issues that were difficult to resolve.*

Earlier, we heard that Diane felt Irene was being misrepresented at board meetings, so there is a divergence of opinion regarding Irene's behaviour. Let's dig a little deeper. What was going on in the company at this time? Who exactly was trying to exclude who, and why?

## Exploring the Company History

In 2003, Custom Products started to suffer profitability problems. Staff turnover and sickness in one production unit was particularly high, at around twice the national rate, and three to four times as high as might be expected in comparable contexts.[9] In response to this, Harry eventually decided that the situation could not continue.

Around a year before, the company had disciplined and sacked, Andrea, a production worker. She had responded by setting up a rival company. Throughout 2002 and 2003, Andrea had recruited people from inside Custom Products. Irene was one of the staff in regular touch with her.

In the summer of 2003, Irene was injured at work and had to go to hospital. Although her injuries did not require a hospital stay, she made a claim against the company for injury. Brenda handled the claim and told me about their meeting afterwards:

*Brenda said that Irene had told her work colleagues that her job was under threat if she did not behave. Brenda was meeting everyone to reassure them that Irene's job was never in question - that it had not been threatened. Harry also attended the meeting.*

*Brenda insisted this was to avoid misinformation getting out. In private, however, Brenda started saying to me that Irene "has a history". I remember Venice where all Irene's friends constantly looked out for her. Knowing Irene and*

*her colleagues, I find it inconceivable that Irene would have made up this claim, but she might have had support or encouragement from colleagues inside or outside the company.*

*I disliked - both at the time, and now - the attempt to assassinate Irene's character. It was undignified and unnecessary and reflected worse on Brenda than on Irene.*

I was present at a discussion where Harry and Brenda discussed Irene's case. Brenda was more 'gung ho' that Harry, but even so Harry expressed the view that "employees have to understand the consequences of continued bad behaviour". He considered that bringing a claim against the company for injury was disloyalty and "not the way we do things around here".

Harry was more forthcoming about the 'history' behind the current tensions:

*He talked about the smokers as a "hot-bed of discontent". I've never seen much evidence of this but it may be that I'm not in a position to say. Harry openly admitted that the most time-consuming items at management meetings were discussions inside the smokers' group (only one out of sixteen managers was a smoker).*

*Harry talked about moving the eating tables because this would break up the group and split smokers from others. I have to say this was active social control - trying to control the way people meet in groups. I don't doubt that he thought he was acting to 'defend the culture' but this is the kind of social control practised in totalitarian regimes, and goes against the 'freedom of association' principle of democratic cultures.*

*The whole management group appear to fear what the smokers are saying. Harry kept talking about taking them on to "protect the culture" and to prevent the culture "going to the dogs", but it appeared to me as "politicking" and unnecessarily oppressive.*

In a democratic society, such freedoms are legally protected but Harry's view was that Irene had got in with a "bad crowd" and was being influenced by people who

knew Andrea. This was part of the argument to justify rearranging tables so that smokers could not talk to others at lunch time. Officially, this was done as a 'health and safety' measure.

Shortly after her meeting with Brenda, Irene went off sick and was signed off by her doctor for several months. I talked to Diane about the issues behind her sickness:

> *Diane said that Irene was off sick for "personal issues". Irene's department was being restructed at the time. Diane also commented that the 'grapevine was incredible', that Irene would call Harry about things going on that had been reported through the grapevine.*
>
> *Irene asked if John would go to see her. Brenda advised him against it. Diane later did a welfare visit - then Irene came out with a load of stuff accusing John. Irene then had a meeting with Brenda and Diane and did a similar thing in that she accused Brenda of lots of stuff.*
>
> *Irene is raising issues that happened some time back at work as a result of her seeing a psychologist. Things happened but Irene did not raise them at the time - then as a result of talking with her psychologist she comes into work saying I want to talk to X about what happened a few years ago.*

Although Diane characterised Irene's absence as due to personal issues, it seems clear from these comments that workplace issues were highly significant to Irene. Irene was trying to raise matters that were problematic to her, and was actively keeping in touch with work colleagues about events that would affect her future position at work. The network of friends proactively kept her up to date.

As I dug deeper, I found that Andrea's new company, as well as other competitors, were successfully competing with Custom Products for business. Harry decided that the department was not viable in its current state and announced that numbers had to be reduced from 20 to 8. In the latter period of discussion, Irene was back at work and able to participate. During one meeting, I gave an opinion as to how they might evaluate performance fairly:

*Diane agreed it was a good idea and encouraged me to contribute it. Harry saw us chatting so I asked everyone if they felt they were able to choose the best team. Immediately one or two people in the group started nodding and supporting that. Irene said "I can think of 8 people and I'm not one of them". She put herself down, she was nevertheless behind the idea.*

The criteria for downsizing was set on the basis of sickness record, length of service, performance and whether full-time or part-time. Based on these criteria, Irene was amongst the group of people selected to remain in the department and this made Brenda and Diane unhappy. They asked Ben to manipulate the performance and sickness data to see whether Irene could be excluded. As Ben reports:

*Diane wondered how to account for the performance ranking – whether we should use the order they were listed as a kind of preference order. Harry thought we could not assume this so I did it both ways. It did affect the result a bit, but not much. We assessed sickness differently taking account of the % of time taken off. We looked at different ways of interpreting the data. Diane said "if I take this list to the rest of the group they would think it is totally unfair". So we quantified it differently. I think it was fairer, but it also meant people gained a few marks relative to Irene.*

*I did something similar with sickness. However we did it, Irene stayed in the top eight. Diane and Brenda had their own agenda for who they wanted in there, and they were trying to get the data to match their wishes. Harry, however, told me that he insisted they use the scoring system described to the group.*

In other words, Diane and Brenda were trying to manipulate the results of their own selection process to justify excluding Irene, but could not do so. They then proceeded to use the comment that Irene had made in the meeting against her. Irene was asked to voluntarily leave the department based on her self-evaluation. As Ben continues:

*Diane discussed this with me on Monday - she **was asked** to put across to Irene that she herself said she was not a good production worker. Irene was so pleased, however, that she had been selected to stay in the team that Diane got frustrated by her enthusiasm. It must have been Brenda who asked Diane to leave the department. I can't see who else it could be.*

It could have been someone else. As the dispute with Ben and Brenda shows, Brenda often escalated matters to Harry to reassure herself that she would have his support for a course of action. Ben reports that Diane "was asked to put across to Irene" a particular view. Brenda was Diane's manager, so the putting of this view was either at Brenda's or Harry's instigation, probably with Harry's support.

At the next group meeting, it was reported that Irene was off sick again. This time she was telling friends that she would not be returning to work. Brenda wanted to fire her straightaway for breach of contract, but Harry felt this was too abrupt (and they had no concrete evidence). Instead, he asked that Irene be examined by a company doctor. If she was passed fit but refused to return, then there would be no come back if they sacked her. Irene came back to work.

What emerges from this analysis is something akin to a game of cat and mouse with managers looking to catch the employee in a breach of contract that makes their position untenable.

Eventually, managers opted for one aspect of Irene's working life over which she would not compromise – non-attendance at two 'compulsory' social events. In previous years, Irene booked holidays to cover these days. When this option was removed, she would call in sick on the day. Eventually, she had to admit she did not wish to attend. Based on Diane's observations, it appears John took the lead in the directors' meeting to convince colleagues that this should not be allowed. Irene's personnel record says that she 'resigned due to a culture mismatch' (an interesting euphemism for what other people regarded as 'getting the sack').

In September 2003, the department from which Andrea was sacked, reduced its number to eight staff. While I could not say with certainty there was a direct connection, the disciplining and sacking of Andrea, and the subsequent departure of workers for Andrea's company, combined with ongoing contact between Andrea's workers and those at Custom Products, all had an impact. In all, there were four workers marginalized and encouraged out in a similar way during this period.[10]

Think of the last person excluded or sacked from your workplace. Did you 'see it coming' or was it a complete shock? What were the circumstances? Did their departure impact on you? In what way and why?

Managers are often unaware, or do not take into account, how sacking a person affects their work colleagues. Some may be pleased, others grow more afraid. What is your experience?

## The Dynamics of Discipline and Control

As we learnt in Chapter 3, when relationships become more intimate, plurality reigns as listening, learning and debate thrive. Personal commitments deepen, emotions are positively affected, positive character attributions are made. Self-images and views of others improve, openness and honesty increases.

But when parties feel threatened – and all feel threatened when their job competence or sexual behaviour comes under scrutiny - other behaviours and outcomes are observable. People feel threatened and withdraw. They become anxious and break confidences. People become even more reticent about giving information. They may lose weight or sleep. Accusations may be made. Anger is triggered.

Cultures develop as a response to the way people defend their relationships and resolve disputes. The first choice that two parties have is whether to engage in dialogue. If they both consent, then the path is set to reaching understanding. Dialogue is not necessarily easy

– further differences may emerge – but so long as the commitment to understanding is retained, the outcomes are likely to be:

- Plurality, Shared Understanding, Value Congruence
- Listening and Learning
- Openness and Honesty
- Increase in Intimacy

It is always possible, however, that one or other party will not wish to debate contested issues. In this case, one or other party resists while the other coerces (i.e. tries to have a debate). If the resisting party returns to dialogue, the two parties can reach a satisfactory outcome. Alternatively, the resistance may lead to rejection of the other person's argument (or the person themselves). This can lead to confrontation and the possibility of the following outcomes:

- Blame, Physical or Psychological Withdrawal
- Resignation (emotional or contractual)
- Contract Termination
- Caution and Dishonesty
- Loss of Intimacy

The process of dispute resolution, and the possible outcomes are summarised in Figure 5. The character of a workplace culture, therefore, depends on the conflict resolution processes adopted, particularly when emotions are triggered by differences. If the response is co-operation to achieve shared understanding, the direction of change is democratic – and will promote social cohesion. If the response is coercion to impose the 'right' point of view, the direction is towards confrontation, something that will lead to oppression if unchecked by democratic accountability.

Between these two, however, are autocratic behaviours. It is fashionable to criticise autocracy, but I would argue that this behaviour is sometimes (temporarily) necessary to avoid reaching consensus too

quickly. Good decision-making thrives when people can express (and have time to reflect on) different points of view.

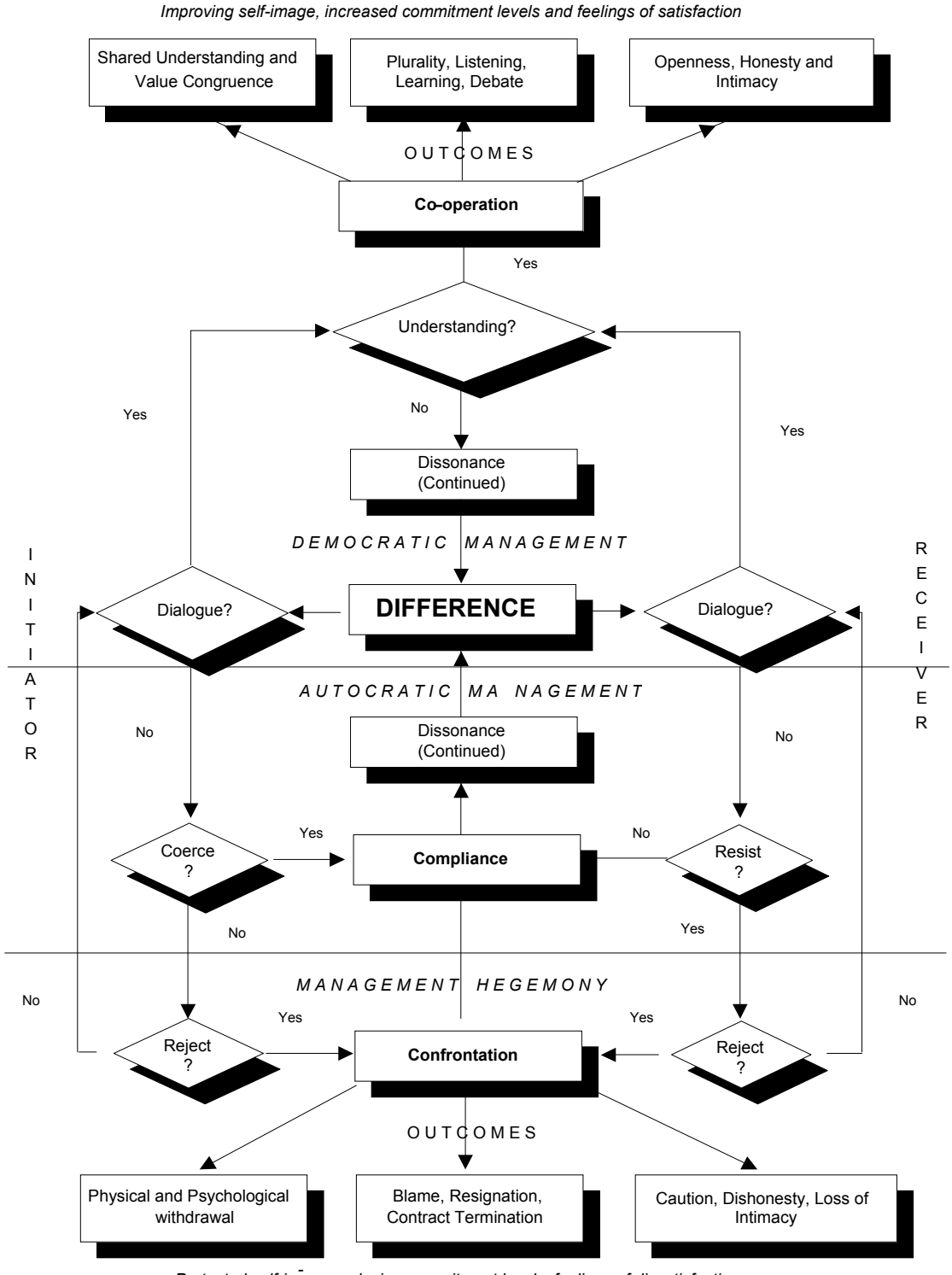
Providing this takes place within a framework of emotional commitment, rather than to punish or socially exclude, the overall direction of culture change remains democratic. Free speech has an important role in this context. Sometimes, however, "free speech" rights are selectively applied (i.e. those in power, or who have influence, assume their right to determine who will, and will not, be heard). In my view, whenever this occurs, it is morally legitimate to challenge their authority.

## Alternative Approaches to Managing Conflict

Workplace cultures that are guided by the above realisation have been developing for some time but require a different legal framework and set of assumptions. At present, both employer and employee are forced onto different sides of a fence. Anything required under company law becomes the responsibility of the employer (normally understood as the company directors, shareholders and senior management). Anything required of employees under the law becomes the responsibility of the employee.

This *creates* the authoritarian relationship between employer and employee, and the incentive for management control over staff. Each law that requires the employer to enforce particular behaviour on the part of the employee increases the authoritarian nature of organisational life and reduces the scope for equitable relationships. We saw this clearly in the relationship between Diane and Ben when the Data Protection Laws prevented Diane from acting in a way that a friend might have done. We will see the impacts even more acutely in Chapter 5, after Simon resigns as a director and uses employment law to influence his co-director Andy.

**Figure 5 - Conflict Resolution and Culture Development**




As I say above, democracy does not thrive if people seek consensus too quickly, or suppress differences in

their interests. Democracy thrives where multiple interests are exposed and debate takes place to maximise satisfaction of them. A good example of this is an international organisation that has evolved a governance model precisely on this principle.

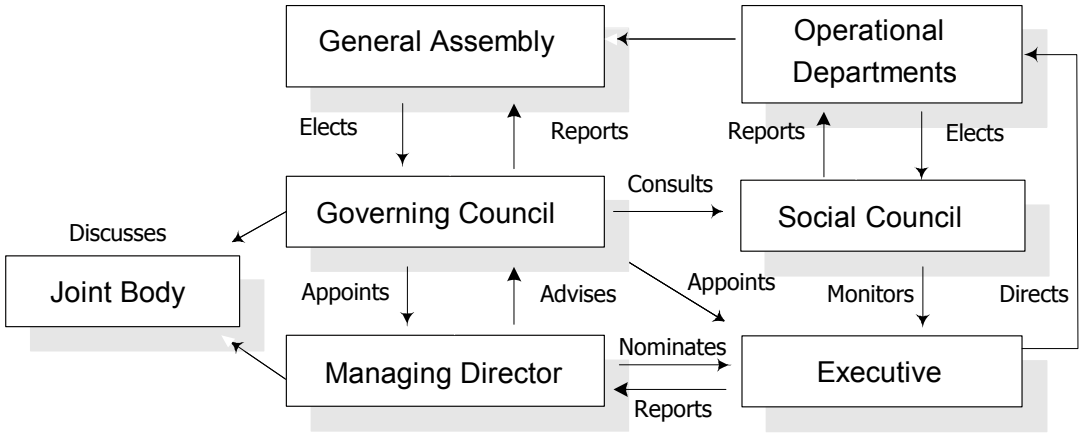
## The Mondragon Cooperatives

The Mondragon co-operative complex has 67,000 members organised into 190 businesses in 45 countries[11]. The leaders of each business unit are elected to a governing council. Managers are appointed by the council, and given powers to suspend staff if they misbehave, but are themselves subject to control through social councils (1 elected member per 10 employees), line management and a governing council. Both the social council and governing council, which each elect their own President, can challenge the behaviour of senior managers by bringing matters to monthly meetings with the company President and/or Chief Executive.

The academic literature is mixed on the extent to which the culture is genuinely democratic. The presence of line management relationships are taken by some as signs of an authoritarian culture that represses dissent.[12] Others, however, note that the culture is autocratic with regards to work tasks, but democratic with regard to social relationships.[13] The most sophisticated analysis illustrates how authority and accountability are organised into 'closed-loops' rather than hierarchies.

It is clear from all sources that the dynamics regarding social control and discipline are different. Interestingly, at Mondragon itself, the General Assembly (rather than senior management) is placed at the top of diagrams depicting organisational relationships. The above diagram is derived from materials obtained during a field trip in 2003.

**Figure 6 – Governance at Mondragon**




Culturally, more use is made of social pressure, critical debate and ostracism. Less use is made of formal discipline, demotion and exclusion. This dynamic is evident in transcripts of a meeting between myself, Harry, John and Mikel (a tutor with 30 years experience at the management training centre in Mondragon). He was described by a local researcher as the only person who actually visited all the co-operatives regularly (on the two-year rolling programme). In the extracts below, we discuss governance practices in the co-operatives:

*Mikel:* *The social council gathers opinions. They give these to the president or advise the Managing Director. If one or other director takes the decision to punish you or me, the social council can ask for the reason because sometimes some boss or foreman may give out too strong a punishment. Maybe they are acting in a very authoritarian way. If that is the case speaking to the social council is one way to address this ….(pause)…the social council can ask for the reason and maybe challenge the punishment… (inaudible).*

*Harry:* *Disciplinary and grievance?*

*Mikel:* *Yes.*

*John:* *But as mediators, I can see.*

*Rory:* *Yes. It's .. (pause).. policing the disciplinary and grievance rather than doing it?*

*Mikel:* *Yes, for punishment in general. If, for example, a boss is very authoritarian the social council can say "you are going to far". This is the function of the social council.*[14]

The impact of this is noted in other studies of the same organisation:

> *The culturally grounded tradition of discussion, debate, and confrontation is still alive within both MCC and ULMA. In marked contrast to my experiences as a researcher and consultant in the U.S. organizations, I found nearly all employees of the cooperatives to be quite open in voicing their criticisms of their supervisors, managers, and elected officials; there was clearly little or no fear of reprisal.*[15]

The reason there is no fear of reprisal is that managers are hired by elected representatives (governing council members) on renewable 4 year contracts. Managers may or may not be members (most are), and even if a manager loses their management role, their membership of the organisation (i.e. their employment) remains secure.

Once a worker is accepted as a member, they are – except in the case of the most extreme breaches of trust – guaranteed employment in the corporation. The result is that *both* managers and workers feel more secure. The commitment to inclusion surprised both Harry and John – both during and after the visit. During one discussion Mikel described the punishment for a worker who stole from the business. Harry and John were adamant that this worker would be sacked in their own business, but Mikel insisted that people were not sacked, even for stealing, because their culture was based on cooperation, not confrontation.

Mikel claimed that only once in his 30 years could he recall a worker being sacked for stealing. In this case, members voted a member out because they held a position of trust in the group's banking organisation. In other cases, they used temporary suspension. Permanent exclusion, at Mondragon, is regarded as a *management* failure, not a failure of the worker.

In rounding off the discussion on exclusion, John reveals his inability to move away from hierarchical thinking when he asks who has 'ultimate' control.

*John: What happens if they don't – I mean – accept it? What happens if they don't kind of agree? What is the ultimate….*

*Mikel: In our culture we have cooperation, not confrontation. We have to discuss.*

*John: Dialogue?*

*Mikel: Yes*

In short, no minority group has 'ultimate' power – that power is vested in a General Assembly of all members, although sub-groups (the governing council, social council and executive group) wield considerable influence.

One key difference, therefore, between UK/US corporations and the MCC is the way that all staff are formally subject to controls by others staff from two or more directions, not one. Harry wanted to understand the appointment process in more detail:

*Harry: Two questions. In reality, do the Governing Council tend to be managers and department heads? And the second question, how much do they change every four years?*

*Mikel: The President spends eight years, generally. Some of them more than 12 years, others only 4 years. The average is 8 years.*

*Harry: Who elects the president?*

*Mikel: In most of the cases, the General Assembly chooses the Governing Council. The Council members choose the President. This happens in most cases. But in a number of cooperatives, the General Assembly chooses the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary [directly]. This is not common. That is, for example, the case at Fagor or at Arizmendi, my own cooperative. In the Governing*

*Council they chose me - I don't know why (laughter).*

*The others, the members of the governing council – most change every 4 years. As for department directors, they could be members of the Governing Council in most cases. In Fagor, the human resources director is a member of the governing council. But in most of the cooperatives there is only one or maybe none [out of 7, 9 or 12 members].*

*In the other cooperatives, the industrial ones with 300 or 400 workers - in most of the cases there are 9 persons - maybe 3, 4 or 5 are blue collar workers; the other 4, 5 or 6 are technicians. Some, maybe one or two may be department directors. This is our history.*

It is, in social control terms, important that the social councils and governing councils are **not** dominated by department directors for the reason that part of their function is to monitor and control them. Department directors, in turn, monitor and control the workers in their *operational* roles.

## The Impacts of Mondragon's Governance System

This alternative way of achieving social control is all the more interesting because the Mondragon Cooperatives are twice as productive and profitable as the average Spanish firm, 57% of its income comes from exports (i.e. it competes successfully in global markets) and 10% - rather than the 1% norm in the UK – is contributed to social and educational projects.

Furthermore, the governance and control mechanisms are duplicated – in slightly modified form – in retail, education and social organisations. While the UK has different governance ideologies for companies and charities, this is not considered necessary in the Mondragon Cooperatives. In educational and social organisations, the stakeholders may be different but the governance model is the same.

The wisdom that specialist management knowledge is required to govern an organisation is turned on its head with spectacular social and economic results. The governing council – the equivalent of the board of directors in UK law – is typically dominated by technical and manual workers with a minority of department directors (usually only 1 or 2). Managers are controlled both through top-down relationships – a department director or General Manager, as well as bottom-up relationships with the social councils and general assembly.

Exclusion – in the manner described earlier in this chapter – is unheard of and can be challenged in several forums, including the general assembly. The culture is argumentative and confrontational, but strikes almost never occur (there has been only 1 in 45 years across 190 businesses). In considering the points made earlier, because there is no possibility of withdrawing from a dispute (unless a person voluntarily resigns) or excluding another without a hearing (they can appeal to their fellow workers), levels of emotion are high and conflict is resolved through discussion.

Conventional management wisdom would be that such a distributed power structure, with no group in 'ultimate' control, would be inefficient. Mondragon builds its model on the basis that the 'ultimate' sovereign power is the collective (and not the individual, as is the case in an entrepreneurial firm). Nor is an elite executive group regarded as the 'ultimate' source of power (comprised of the Chairman, Senior Independent Director and Chief Executive Office)[16]. The economist Shann Turnbull identifies the distributed power structures at Mondragon as a *source* of efficiency because information is routed more quickly and reliably to the relevant body.

Each body has different responsibilities (operational, strategic, social) and this enables them to apply their time to the issues on which they focus and only communicate over matters where divergent interests need reconciliation. As a result, much *less* information moves around the organisation with three benefits: it saves time (and time is money); it improves the accuracy of communications (less degradation); it improves the

quality of discussion and debate (because information is more reliable).[17]

In terms of emotion, the distributed power structure provides more outlets for all members and prevents the build up of explosive conflicts. No one individual or group can *arbitrarily* impose its will on another. Members always have someone who is empowered to act on their behalf with whom they can discuss problems at work.

From a governance perspective, the arrangements overcome the limitations of "bounded rationality"[18]. Each body has more time to discuss issues within its remit. More intelligence and more perspectives are applied than is possible with a unitary board. Moreover, the same issues are discussed from the perspective of different interests (operational, owner, worker). This promotes the satisfaction of all parties' needs.

Have you ever belonged to a 'democratic' organisation? Was it organised like the Mondragon co-operatives with several bodies holding different powers? Did it feel democratic to you? Why? Did you participate in decision-making? If not, why not?

Some studies have found that members in 'democratic' organisations sometimes feel their organisations are *less* democratic than other organisations they belong to. Typically, such organisations have a single centralised 'council' rather than the decentralised structure at Mondragon.

What really makes an organisation democratic? Is it majority voting? Is it being able – and unafraid - to speak out? Is it being able to stop proposals that harm minority interests? Is it being able to create proposals and have them discussed? Is it always having someone who will listen to your point of view?

## Summary

In this chapter I have suggested a number of things.

- The motive to discipline arises from an emotional need to reduce intimacy.
- The motive to control arises from an emotional need to maintain or increase intimacy.
- A stable relationship is one that is equitable with both parties comfortable with the level of intimacy.
- Many disputes, rejections and withdrawals arise because one party cannot process the emotions aroused by the other party.
- Discipline and control, therefore, occurs in response to emotional (rather than rational) needs.
- An authoritarian relationship – or social structure - is one where only one party's feelings are regarded as valid.
- A democratic relationship – or social structure – is one where all parties' feelings are regarded as valid.

These suppositions find support from a particularly unusual source. It is widely understood – even claimed by the National Westminster Bank - that around 80% of organisations fail in the first five years.[19] What is less well known, however, is that of the 20% that survive, they are overwhelmingly run by people over the age of 55![20]

The 80% figure is misleading, however. Many businesses close because the entrepreneur moves onto something they consider is better, not because the business could not survive. Amongst *established* businesses, the failure rate is only 6% per annum – just 30% over a 5 year period.[21]

Even this failure rate is high by the standards in Mondragon. It is a by-product of the way we encourage managers to manage in our culture. The approach at Mondragon mitigates the effects of managers who discipline and control for emotionally defensive reasons. As self-employed workers, members cannot discipline and punish each other using the legal remedies of

employees and employers in UK private companies. Instead they must resolve their differences together through dialogue. The workplace is more argumentative and emotional, but also far more cohesive.

Is the impact measurable? Yes. The business failure rate at Mondragon is less than 0.5% per annum. You have read that correctly! In 45 years, only 3 of the 190 businesses have failed. The governance structure frustrates the arbitrary use of power and provides structures for parties to work out their differences. As a result the business survival rate is over 1000% higher than amongst *established* businesses in the UK, and 2500% higher than amongst all UK businesses. For this reason alone their model of governance and dispute resolution merits close consideration.

Having traversed the terrain of discipline and control, let us now look at how these issues feed into discussion of leadership. The commonly held view that managers are all-powerful does not hold up under close scrutiny. As I will show in the next chapter, managers often feel even more controlled than the workers for which they are responsible. Prepare yourself as we dig beneath both media and management rhetoric to experience leaders' reality.

## Notes on Chapter 4

1 Goffman, E. (1969) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

2 Harris, T., Harris, A. (1986) *Staying OK,* London: PAN.

3 Harris, T. (1970) *I'm OK – You're OK,* London: PAN.

4 See Pease, A., Pease, B. (2004), *The Definitive Book of Body Language,* Orion.

5 Adams, J. S. (1965) "Inequity in Social Exchanges" in Berkowitz (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, New York, Academic Press, 2: 67-300.

6 Brenda, Ben, Diane, Harry and John are all composite fictional characters outlined in a PhD study. Because of the sensitivity of the matters discussed, I have mixed up biographical information about different people to protect individual identities so it is impossible to establish who said what. Some of my own experiences are captured in Ben's character – but they are mixed with the experience of three other research participants. While the characters are fictional, the actions, words and events are **not** fiction – the events and outcomes described actually took place. The interpretation put on them is my own.

7 Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power,* Berkeley Books

8 ibid, p. 23

9 Ridley-Duff, R. (2005) *Communitarian Perspectives on Corporate Governance,* PhD Thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, Chapter 5, http://www.scribd.com/doc/3271344/.

10 To avoid a plethora of characters – three cases were combined into a single storyline to constitute "Irene". This makes the text easier to read and focuses attention on the various tactics deployed by managers to exclude people from the company while staying within the law.

11 As at 6th March 2003 – the information was gathered during a field trip from Mikel Lezamiz. The dialogue was transcribed from digital recordings made on that day.

12 Kasmir, S. (1996) *The Myth of Mondragon*, State University of New York Press.

13 Oakeshott, R. (1990) *The Case for Worker Co-ops (2nd Edition)*, Macmillan.

14 Transcription of meeting, 6th March 2003.

15 Cheney, G. (1999) *Values at Work*, ILR Press/Cornell University Press, p. 139

16 This the current recommendation in the Combined Code that is used to validate 'best practice' in FTSE 100 companies.

17 Turnbull, S. (1994) "Stakeholder Democracy: Redesigning The Governance of Firms and Bureaucracies", *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 23(3): 321-360.

18 Simons, H., Hawkins, D. (1949) *Some conditions in macro-economic stability,* Econometrica, 1949.

19 Wilson, F. (2004) *Organizational Behaviour and Work (2nd Edition)*, Oxford University Press.

20 *Ibid.*

21 Cornforth C. J., Thomas, A., Spear, R. G., Lewis, J. M. (1988) *Developing Successful Worker Co-ops*, Sage Publications.

# Chapter 5 – Leaders and Followers

## Introduction

As a businessperson, I am no Richard Branson. Nor do I want to be. I did, however, get a few surprises when I was reading books on entrepreneurship during 2003. It seems that we have four things in common.

- Each of our first business ventures failed
- Neither of us was discouraged from trying again
- We both have 'balanced' left/right brain activity
- We are both men

I suspect that the comparison pretty much ends there. Branson, as we all know, is a billionaire – my own worth is a very tiny faction of his. I have no idea, however, how much wealth I have generated for others but if it was measured, it is likely to be considerable. He has always been incredibly good at getting publicity. I do not much like publicity, although a bit of recognition does not go amiss. He has (or claims) little interest in politics – if his performances on *Question Time* are anything to go by. I have had a lifelong fascination with political processes, even though I decided 15 years ago to have no further involvement with political parties.

Undoubtedly, you have encountered Richard Branson indirectly through his products. You have probably travelled on Virgin airlines or trains, bought Virgin cola, or visited Virgin superstores. You will never have heard of me, but perhaps I also have touched your life. Perhaps you, or a friend or relative had cancer and they needed to find a local support group? Or perhaps you were involved in, or benefited from, one of the thousands of Millennium Projects? Maybe you are deaf, or have a friend or relative who is deaf, who called the Royal National Institute for

Deaf People (RNID)? Or you were down on your luck once, and were housed by the Housing Services Agency (HAS), or lived in sheltered accommodation run by the National Children's Home (NCH), or recovered in a Drink Crisis Centre? Maybe you booked onto one of the thousands of seminars, courses or conferences run by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) or the Careers Research Advisory Services (CRAC)? If you did any of these, then I have touched your life.

Richard Branson's fame I can live without but his fortune is tempting! None of the above projects paid so well that I could take up the hobby of travelling around the world in a hot air balloon. And yet, when I reflect on things, I would gladly forego his fortune if the price was the loss of the life that I have led. Many years ago, it dawned on me that I could not improve on the pleasure of an intimate chat in the pub with good friends or with my wife, children and family over the dinner table.

Lest you think me a moral person, my involvement working in the social economy was not motivated by a sense of charity – I believe in trading for a living, both for myself and others. But somehow, after two years of working at Procter & Gamble, it was not a difficult decision to stop committing my time to the manufacture of shampoo and crisps (nice as these things are) and use my time doing something I found more worthwhile.

The reason I tell you all this, is that most people would consider Richard Branson far more powerful (and influential) than me. In one way this is true. In another way it is false. Both "power" and "leadership" are terms that have been redefined over the last 40 years by the gender movement. In place of the idea that power is control or influence over others, firstly women – and now men – are redefining it as power over their own lives (including their working lives). Richard Branson may feel that he has power over *his own* life, but I would not take this for granted.

The quotation below is long, but because it had such a big impact on my thinking when I first read it in 1995, I present it at length and thank the author for their

permission[1]. I cannot read this story without choking with emotion so let us see what impact it has on you:

*Ralph was a forty-one-year old man in our men's group. He was married, the father of two children. He had been in the group for three months, and had hardly said a word. One evening he looked up and said, "I think I'd like to speak up tonight. I'm afraid I joined this group only because my wife forced me to. She got involved in one of these women's movement operations and started changing. She called it 'growing'. About three months ago she said, 'Ralph, I'm tired of having to choose between a relationship with you and a relationship with myself.' Pretty fancy rhetoric, I thought. Then she added, "There's a men's group forming that's meeting next Tuesday. Why don't you get involved?"*

*Well, I kind of laughed her off. But a week later she started again. 'The group's meeting next Tuesday. As far as I'm concerned, if you're not doing some changing in three months, that's the end!"*

*"'The end! For the sake of a men's group?" I asked.*

*"It's symbolic, Ralph," she said.*

*"So I figured I'd join this symbol and see what you fags were talking about! But the problem was, you didn't fit my image, and I began identifying with some of the things you were saying. Well, anyway, last night Ginny reminded me the three months were up tomorrow. So I think I'd like to speak up tonight."*

*We laughed at Ralph's motivation, but encouraged him to continue.*

*"Well, what struck me was how each of you chose different careers, but you all worried about succeeding. Even you, Jim – even though you're unemployed and have a laid-back*

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[1] Excerpt from Warren Farrell, *Why Men Are the Way they Are* (N.Y.: Berkley Books, 1988), pp. 3-11. Permission granted by Warren Farrell: www.warrenfarrell.com.

*facade. That started me thinking about my career."*

*"All my life I wanted to play baseball. As a pro. When I was a sophomore in high school I was pretty hot stuff, and my uncle came and scouted me. Later he said, 'Ralph, you're good. Damn good. And you might make it to the pros if you really work at it. But only the best make good money for a long time. If you really want to be good to yourself, make use of your intelligence, get yourself a good job – one you can depend on for life."*

*"I was surprised when my folks agreed with him. Especially Dad. Dad always called me 'Ralph, who pitched the no-hitter.' Dad stopped calling me that after that conversation. Maybe that turned the tide for me." Ralph hesitated, as if he were piecing something together, but he quickly withdrew from his introspection.*

*"Anyway, I was proud of myself for making the transition like a man. I'd always liked reading and learning, but just hadn't focused much on it. But I figured just for a couple of years I'd 'play the system': borrow friends' old term papers, take a look at old exams, focus my reading on the questions different teachers tended to ask, and so on. I never cheated. I just figured I'd 'play the system' for a couple of years, raise my grades, then when I got into college, I could really learn – I could do what I wanted after that."*

*"Well, 'playing the system' worked. I got into a top-notch university. But it soon became apparent that a lot of people graduated from good universities – if I wanted to really stand out it would help to 'play the system' just a few more years, get into a good grad school or law school, and then, once I did that, I could do with my life what I wanted after that.*

*"I decided on law school – but to become a social-work lawyer, so I could make a real contribution to people who most needed it. But about my second or third year of law school – when my colleagues saw I was taking what they*

*called this 'missionary law' seriously, they explained that if I really wanted to be effective as a social-work lawyer, I'd better get some experience first in the hard-knocks, reality-based field of corporate law rather than ease into the namby-pamby area of social-work law right away – if I didn't I wouldn't get the respect to be effective. Frankly, that made sense. So I joined a top corporate law firm in New York. I knew I could work there for a couple of years, and then really do what I wanted with my life after that.*

*"After a couple of years in the firm, I was doing well. But the whole atmosphere of the corporate legal community made it clear that if I dropped out after two years it would be seen as a sign that I couldn't hack the pressure. If I continued for just a couple more years, and became a junior partner – junior partners were the ones marked with potential – then I could really do what I wanted with my life after that.*

*"Well, it took me seven years to get the junior partnership offered to me – with politics and everything. But I got it. By that time I had lost some of the desire to be a social-work lawyer – it was considered a clear step backward. In other ways I maintained that ideal – it seemed more meaningful than kowtowing to rich money. But I also knew the switch would mean forfeiting a lot of income. My wife Ginny and I had just bought a new home – which we pretty much had to do with two kids – and I knew they'd be going to college…..Ginny's income was only part-time now, and she was aching to travel a bit.*

*"By that time, I also realized that while junior partners had potential, the people with the real ins in the legal community were not the junior partners, but the senior partners. I figured I had a pretty big investment in the corporate law area now – if I just stuck it out for a couple more years, I could get a senior partnership, get a little money saved for the kids' education and travel, and* ***then*** *I could really do with my life what I wanted…."*

*"It took me eight more years to get the senior partnership. I can remember my boss calling me into the office and saying, 'Ralph, we're offering you a senior partnership." I acted real calm, but my heart was jumping toward the phone in anticipation of telling Ginny. Which I did. I told Ginny I had a surprise. I'd tell her when I got home. I asked her to get dressed real special. I refused to leak what it was about. I made a reservation in her favourite restaurant, bought some roses and her favourite champagne."*

*"I came home real early so we'd have time to sip it together; I opened the door and said, "Guess what?" Ginny was looking beautiful. She said, "What is it Ralph?" I said, "I got the senior partnership!" She said, "Oh, fine, that's great," but there was a look of distance in her eyes. A real superficial enthusiasm, you know what I mean?"*

*We nodded.*

*"So I said, "What do you mean "Oh, fine" – I've been working since the day we met to get this promotion for us, and you say "Oh, fine"?"*

*"Every time you get a promotion, Ralph", Ginny announced, "you spend less time with me. I guess I just wish you'd have more time for me. More time to love me."*

*"Why do you think I've been working my ass off all these years if it isn't to show you how much I love you?" I said.*

*"Ralph, that's not what I mean by love. Just look at the kids, Ralph."*

*"Well, I did look at the kids. Randy is seventeen. And Ralph Jr. is fifteen. Randy just got admitted to college – a thousand miles from here. Each year I keep promising myself that 'next year' I'll really get to know who they are. 'Next year…'. 'Next year.' But next year he'll be in college. And I don't even know who he is. And I don't know whether I'm his dad or his piggy bank."*

*"I don't know where to begin with Randy, but a few weeks ago I tried to change things a bit with Ralph Jr. He was*

*watching TV. I asked him if he wouldn't' mind turning it off so we could talk. He was a bit reluctant, but he eventually started telling me some of what was happening at school. We talked baseball, and I told him about some of my days pitching. He said I'd already told him. He told me about some of his activities, and I spotted a couple of areas where I thought his values were going to hurt him. So I told him. We got into a big argument. He said I wasn't talking with him, I was lecturing him…'spying on him'.*

*"We've hardly talked since. I can see what I did wrong – boasting and lecturing – but I'm afraid if I try again, he'll be afraid to say much now, and we'll just sit there awkwardly. And if he mentions those values, what do I say? I want to be honest, but I don't want to lecture. I don't even know where to begin."*

*Ralph withdrew from the group. He had struck so many chords it took us more than ten minutes to notice that he was fighting back tears. Finally one of the men picked up on it and asked, "Ralph, is there anything else you're holding back?"*

*"I guess maybe I am holding something back," he said hesitantly. "I feel like I spent forty years of my life working as hard as I can to become somebody I don't even like."*

*When I heard that sentence fifteen years ago, I was twenty-seven. It's been perhaps the most important sentence I've heard in my life: "**I feel like I've spent forty years of my life working as hard as I can to become somebody I don't even like."** Even as I heard it, the ways it was threatening to be true in my own life flashed through my mind.*

*Ralph continued: "I was mentioning some of my doubts to a few of my associates at work. They listened attentively for a couple of minutes, then one made a joke, and another excused himself. Finally, I mentioned this men's group – which I never should have done – and they just laughed me out of the office. I've been the butt of jokes ever since: "How are the US Navel Gazers doing, Ralph boy?"*

*"Suddenly I realized. Ginny had a whole network of lady friends she can talk with about all this. Yet the men I've worked with for seventeen years, sixty hours a week, hardly know me. Nor do they want to."*

*Ralph withdrew again. But this time he seemed to be taking in what he had just said as if he were putting together his life as he was speaking. Then his face grew sad. A few of us who might otherwise have said something held back.*

*"I guess I could handle all this," Ralph volunteered, fighting back tears again, "but I think, for all practical purposes, I've lost Ginny in the process. And maybe I could handle that, too. But the only other people I love in this world are Randy and Ralph Jr. And when I'm really honest with myself – I mean **really** honest – I think for all practical purposes I've lost them too –"*

*We started to interrupt, but Ralph stopped us, tears silently escaping his eye. "What really gets me...what really gets me **angry** is that I did everything I was supposed to do for forty years, did it better than almost any other man I know, and I lost everyone I love in the process, including myself. I don't mean to be philosophical, but the more I did to stand out, the more I became the same. Just one more carbon copy. Oh, I got to a high level, okay. A high-level mediocre.*

*"In some ways, I feel I could handle all that too. But look at me – paid more than any two of you guys put together, supposedly one of the top decision-makers in the country, and when it comes to my own home, my own life, I don't even know how to begin."*

*Ralph cried. For the first time in twenty-two years.*

*Ralph is with me almost every day of my life. Every time I am appreciated or applauded, the image of Ralph makes me wonder whether the applause is seducing me into saying something that is popular but less honest than I want to be. Sometimes, of course, I just forget Ralph and*

*take the applause, but the image of Ralph is there as a resource when I'm in my more secure moments.*

*After that session, I started looking at my own life and Ralph's life differently. I had always assumed power meant having status and access to income, influence, and external rewards. Ralph had all of them. Yet up close he didn't seem very powerful. I started asking whether power meant, rather, the ability to control my own life. And that made looking at power much more compatible with looking within myself.*

*Most men feel much less powerful than Ralph. Ralph is a winner among men – and women. Compared to him, millions of men are losers. If you are a man, powerlessness is hearing a bomb go off and watching your only buddy's head spurt blood before you told him you cared. Powerlessness is returning with agent orange from a war that you were thought of as a fool or a murderer for fighting, having your government refusing to take responsibility for agent orange contamination, passing it onto your daughter and looking at her deformed arm everyday of your life, paying taxes to support the war, and then being told "you make the rules." From his perspective, that's blaming the victim. At eighteen he did not make the rule to subject himself to death while his sister stayed at home, received an education, and married a survivor. He didn't feel powerful when women had an equal right to join the armed forces for money, but not an equal responsibility to be drafted.*

*If we define power in traditional terms – the ability to gain access to external rewards – Ralph had it over all the men in the group. And almost all the women in America. Yet, if we redefine power as the ability to control one's own life, Ralph probably had less power than anyone in the group. Ralph had given up the ability to control his own life by spending his life doing what he was programmed to do. Most of us were questioning at least some of the things we were programmed to do. Ralph had lost real power by*

*trying to gain the appearance of power. He was a leader. But he was following "a program for leaders"; therefore, he was really a follower. He had reached a high level, but had done so by adapting to his boss and his boss's boss.*

Gender researchers have found that our aspirations for relationships and children play a pivotal role in career choice and development. Consider how your relationships have influenced your career development. If you have (or want to have) children, how has it affected you? How have your (and your partner's) aspirations changed your role at home and at work? How much *choice* do you have in determining whether you work or are a parent? Did you and your partner ever *discuss* who would be the primary worker and who would be the primary carer? Or was it just 'common sense' who would do what?

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## The Five Components of Power

I do not know if it the above story is actually true or a narrative invented to introduce men to their own issues. Frankly, I do not care – it such a good story that any man who has held a leadership role will surely find at least a dozen things that resonate. And maybe for some women too. While I do not fully share Farrell's views either on the prospects for change, or the way to conceptualise power (see Chapter 7), it was a moment of profound intellectual insight to reconceptualise power as the ability to control one's own life (see below).

Ralph's life was full of gains and losses. His gains and losses are the same as those experienced by some women

who devote themselves to their careers – they can learn from Ralph as well. When John Molloy did a study of career women, he found that only 20% would - if they could have their time over - forsake family life or marriage a second time[1]. That is *less* than the 30% of full-time mothers who - if they could have their time again - said they would **not** choose full-time motherhood again[2].

As Betty Friedan so powerfully argues in her book *The Second Stage,* women's and men's happiness still comes primarily from being with each other – whether at work or at home. The many stories of emptiness and lack of fulfilment in the lives of working women were the basis of her argument. Add this to the stories of emptiness told by women as housewives inside marriage[3], men as husbands inside marriage[4], or as fathers struggling to remain in touch with their children[5], and we can join the dots. We are doing long-term damage to our personal lives by accepting corporate ways of thinking about how to organise life (and even society).

As we weigh up the gains and losses, has an emphasis on power of the first type (status, success, income) meant a loss of power of the second type (control over one's life)? This question led Farrell to a redefine power as access to the following *in line with our expectations and aspirations*:

- **External rewards** (e.g. income, possessions, status)
- **Internal rewards** (e.g. emotional release, positive self-image)
- **Interpersonal contact** (attention, affection, love)
- **Physical health** (well-being, attractiveness and intelligence)
- **Sexual fulfilment** (satisfaction of desire and enjoyment of sensual pleasures)

In the rest of this chapter, I examine some the realities of leadership and power. It is not a picture of misery, but nor is it the idealised image portrayed in the media and business texts. Leaders are human beings too and the behaviour of their "followers" affects them. They become recognised as leaders either because they obtain the wealth to command and control resources, or because others continually propel them into leadership roles on account of their talents and skills. I examine these two routes to leadership and the impacts of each. The conclusions drawn from this discussion may surprise you and will resurface when we consider the dynamics of sexual conflict in Chapter 6.

**Theories of leadership abound. They are generally divided into those that emphasise the personal qualities of the leader, and suggest that whatever the context a good leader will emerge. Other theories examine the match between personality and context, as well as the adaptability of a person to different contexts.**

**An emergent, bottom up, leader is someone whose skills, in a particular context, results in them becoming the focus of attention so that they have to take the lead in particular situations. This view of leadership holds out the hope each person can find a context in which they are capable of exercising leadership qualities.**

**A top-down leader is someone who comes to the fore whatever the context. This view of leadership holds the view that some people are 'born leaders'. In the last few years – after Daniel Goleman's work became popular – people have discussed the idea of *primal leadership*. This theory suggests that leaders become so because they have the capacity to affect others emotions more deeply.**

## Bottom Up and Top Down Leaders

I have had two periods of Ralph-like experience – admittedly less acute. The first was during the 1980s and the second was from the mid-1990s to 2002. After graduating in 1986, I went to work for Procter & Gamble. My career started as a personal assistant to a manager, followed by a move to the IT department to provide temporary support to computer users. Eventually, my appointment was made permanent and within 9 months I became Data Centre Manager for Procter & Gamble (HABC) Ltd with responsibility for several sites across the United Kingdom (UK).

Although I did not reach the heady heights that Ralph did, I can relate to the pattern of his life. Firstly, I had to earn my stripes by accepting a junior role. After a period of commitment, my appointment was made permanent (along with new perks and pay rises). Lastly, as a manager I was given an expense account, enjoyed paid business trips both in the UK and abroad, extensive and expensive management and technical training. The way I was treated by suppliers was radically different: what a difference it makes when you control a budget of half a million pounds. With hindsight, I can see the attractiveness of this lifestyle, but it was not for me and I got out. You must think I am mad, but read on.

The second period of Ralph-like experience took place at Computercraft Ltd. I took a pay cut – something that Ralph considered, but was persuaded not to do – to follow my social aspirations. I decided to spend the next part of life teaching and providing consultancy services to social economy organisations. Although an egalitarian co-operative (it had an equal pay and voting rights policy for over a decade) leaders still emerged on the basis of their wealth-creating powers. This is how Mike, a newly recruited technician, described the organisation when he joined in 2000:

> *The co-operative style did not really touch me, it felt like a normal company but more friendly and supportive, a total contrast to the company I'd come from. We all got on: we knew what we were doing in the period of Autumn 2000. But in head office there were lots of individuals – it did not feel like a complete company because people were doing their own thing. That idea persisted throughout. What stood out there all the way through was that the dominant members were Phil, Des and Rory, particularly Phil/Rory. A few others made telling contributions but the remainder were like ordinary workers. I got a feeling that it was not really like a co-operative because there was this hierarchy. People had different abilities and powers – Phil in particular seemed powerful, really dominant in meetings.*

What Mike drew to my attention was that all three workers who were seen as leaders were at the centre of

important streams of income. I had developed an off-the-shelf software product. Phil headed accounting advice and services. Des was responsible for customised software products. Whether we wanted it or not customers kept coming back for more work. We, in turn, had to train others, and manage the advice and support given to clients.

The emergent nature of this process is something I (and probably others) call 'bottom-up leadership' – it stems from acquiring skills to support both colleagues and customers and evolves slowly over time in a balanced manner. Eventually, individuals become the focal point for an increasing number of social and financial exchanges: customers may not agree a contract unless a key person is involved.

Emergent, bottom up, leadership is accorded to a person that colleagues and customers trust. Later, when Computercraft wanted to sell the product I had developed to another software development company, the buyer wanted me as part of the deal. My clients did not want these terms so the product sale did not go through. My choice was to support (and draw my power from) my clients, rather than the potential purchaser who would have limited my (and my clients) freedom to trade.

The difference between Procter & Gamble (HABC) Ltd and Computercraft Ltd was the process by which I gradually learned and assumed leadership responsibilities. In the first case, the decisions came from those "above" me in the hierarchy – my managers and their managers. In the case of Computercraft Ltd, however, the decision came from those "below" (colleagues/customers) who continually wanted my leadership even when I was trying to reduce and delegate my involvement.

## Debating the Process of Leadership

The contrast in top-down and bottom-up leadership development is apparent in discussions I had later with Harry and John. The following is an extract from a series of email exchanges about the way leaders are identified and developed at Custom Products compared to

Computercraft. After attending Custom Products' management classes, I suggested that John's role marking assignments gave him a 'gate keeping' role over who could become a leader. John responded:

> *All organisations have a culture and a set of values which is sustained in part by senior people's decisions about who is suitable to take management positions (or indeed any type of promotion). I think we are no different except that it is a lot less subjective and a lot more open than many organisations. Larger organisations have management training and the training reflects the values held by that organisation. This is the same in any company where people want to advance. There are control mechanisms in every organisation where people feel pressure if they want to advance their careers, we are not so different.*

John takes for granted that it is, or should be, senior staff who make decisions about promotions. In response, I drew attention to a person whose leadership was emergent but had avoided management classes:

> *Nancy commands the respect of her colleagues (a natural leader, you might say) and has avoided the classes for many years. Chris [a production worker] said that most people in the team looked up to her, and went to her for advice if there was a query about procedure. When I chatted to her, I found that she'd not attended the classes and did not intend to. Chris assumed Nancy was the team leader and only later learnt it was someone else. It stuck me that in a different set-up her abilities may have been recognised and led to her promotion.*

Later, I found out that Nancy was interviewed by Brenda about her career. Brenda's view was that Nancy was "too abrasive" for a leadership role. Others, through their actions, showed their disagreement. The discussion was of interest to Harry. He joined in by commenting:

> *You overplay John's position of influence in the assessment process [as the marker of assignments]. He does contribute to the creation of - hopefully - a rounded picture of individuals adding to input from line managers, HR and other directors. It's fascinating isn't it?*

*I am though perplexed at my inability to spot a "natural leader" as well as you. If the need to undergo relevant training and development prior to taking on a leadership role is acting as an obstacle to the progression of natural leaders, I'm definitely missing something. Alternatively, are you being subjective in your assessment of the individual concerned?*

On the first point, John felt his role was a key one:

*My role is an interesting one and it is mainly there to provide consistency and the link between facilitators. The criteria for assessing the assignments is reasonably objective and again you are right that if people show insufficient understanding of the classes through their assignments it does present them with a problem in terms of advancing. However, the gate is always open in the sense they can do the classes again.*

On the second point, Harry resorts to a common misconception amongst managers – namely, that their own decision-making processes are "objective" and that everyone else's are "subjective". As my response below illustrates, the distinction between subjective and objective is somewhat arbitrary.

*We do it differently - it is not a case of being better/worse. We have developed different strategies for spotting how well people are developing. At Computercraft we had no appointment system for managers, but inevitably people assumed management roles (otherwise the place would not have functioned). This led to a paper in the late 90s that put together an understanding of the way management responsibilities were assumed within the group. We conceived a person's evolution in roughly the following terms:*

***Trainee**: when they are learning the job. **Professional**: when they are proficient enough to perform their job unsupervised, but still need some support. **Expert**: when they become a reference point for others - so much so that most people in the group consult them regularly. **Manager**: a person who has constructed information systems that*

*allows a 'learning' culture to develop. So yes - my assessment is subjective, but framed from within this 'objective' model.*

The model at Custom Products depends only on reports from managers, human resource officers, directors, and John's assignment marks. Informal feedback might also play a role but in interviews it was rare for executives to talk about consulting "subordinates" except when handling complex and difficult situations. Feedback from peer-group members and subordinates – as part of an instituted process – was not part of the evaluation.

The model at Computercraft, however, was informed by which individuals were becoming the focus of social and economic transactions – this was the way that 'natural' leaders were spotted by new staff. Moreover, the formal appraisal process involved peer, self and managerial feedback. New staff internalised their position in the hierarchy by observing how they were treated by others and then used this knowledge to navigate the workplace. While the structure is less obvious, it is common for researchers investigating theoretically egalitarian organisations to ask simple questions to establish the hierarchies. Who do I go to for x? Who can tell me y? Such questions quickly expose hierarchies of knowledge, experience and expertise.

## Laughter Dynamics

People have sophisticated and subtle ways to indicate who they do and do not wish to become leader. For example, research into laughter shows how it is a social activity that signifies the state of a relationship – particularly when considering the level of *women's* laughter. It is now understood that laughter is one of the ways that hierarchies are communicated to group members.[6]

Women more often control the development of private relationships (intimacy), men more often the development public personae (performances). While laughter has been characterised as a "submissive"

behaviour, another view is that it builds up the ego of the party who is making the jokes and encourages them to continue leading (although at a deeper level they are actually *responding* to an invitation). How "submissive" behaviour is used as a power play is revealed by Emily Duberley [7]:

> *Asking a man about himself is flattering as it shows that you are interested in him. Also, almost every man enjoys talking about himself. It makes him feel interesting, valued, and quite simply, happy – and it's no bad thing at all for your chances if a guy feels that he's happier since he started talking to you. Laugh at a bloke's jokes too. Men love this – it makes them feel all big and clever, which is always a good way to get them on-side. A shared sense of humour is a great way to bond.*

Robert Provine discusses the way these dynamics are evident in the workplace but falls into the trap of assuming the joke-teller is 'dominant'. He regards 'downward humour' as a symbolic representation of the power of more senior members of staff. A moment's reflection, however, bears some interesting fruit. Consider a comedy club with stand up comedians. How powerful does the comedian feel? How powerful is the audience? An audience withholding laughter from a comedian sends a powerful message ("not wanted here") so patterns of laughter with 'leaders' cracking jokes and 'followers' laughing show only that formal relationships are accepted informally (at least publicly).

The process of laughter is not just a way to seduce a potential leader, it is also part of the process of indicating who should lead (i.e. accepting someone as a public performer on the group's behalf). Provine summarises the issue as follows:

> *The least amount of speaker laughter occurred when males were conversing with females – this grouping was the only one of the four...having less speaker than audience laughter. As audiences, both males and females were more selective in whom they laughed at or with than they were as speakers – neither males nor females laugh as much at*

> *females as male speakers. In summary, females are the leading laughers…*[8]

Interestingly men suppress their laughter when talking to women, and women play up the amount of laughter when listening to men *that they like*. Both sexes were more selective *as listeners,* and women's laughter was particularly important in this respect.

As Emily Duberley's passage indicates, the *choice* to laugh at someone's attempted joke or witticism is part of the process of selecting and seducing. In place of the commonly held image of leaders making their followers laugh, another view emerges. Leaders invite people to follow by saying something (perhaps telling a joke) and followers signal their approval by laughing. The laughter from the respondent signals consent, *a proactive strategy in the choice of the leader*.

Think of the last time you had a good laugh with friends or work colleagues. Who was triggering the laughter? Was it a collective process, or was one person generating all the laughter? Who told jokes and who listened? Is the joke-teller the person you regard as the group leader? Did you tell or make jokes within the group? How did others respond to you?

In some contexts, I have found my jokes hit their mark and create lots of laughter (particularly giving 'best man' speeches at weddings). In other contexts, my jokes fell flat. Why do you think this is? Is it the joke? The joke teller? Or is it the relationship between joke teller and audience?

## Hazing and Harassment

Another way that leaders are selected is through a process of hazing[9]. Hazing behaviours are often labelled as "harassing" by recipients who are unable to stop them or cope with them, but the interpretation put on hazing behaviour differs depending on the recipient's understanding of its meaning. Hazing behaviours serve

two purposes: firstly, to see whether a person will accept the behavioural norms and authority relations within the group; secondly, to screen for people who will stand up for themselves when challenged or threatened.

Hazing, therefore, can have diametrically opposite meanings, depending on the intentions of the hazer. If a person is seeking someone who will be submissive, they will be looking for a response that indicates acceptance of their will (or point of view). But if they are looking for someone to lead, they may issue a challenge and look for a reaction, particularly one that indicates a capacity for balanced judgement. The recipient, of course, will not know in advance which response will win them favour – hence the ambiguity and angry reactions that can result from cross-purposes. Someone expecting submissive behaviour but receiving an independent judgement may themselves feel challenged and become angry or defensive. Someone expecting independent judgement but seeing submission may feel contempt or disappointment. When expectations and reactions match, however, attraction is the result (in one, but not necessarily both, directions).

This is why the current construction and understanding of 'harassment' is so problematic.[10] Hazing is a normal behaviour for both men and women. While men's hazing is frequently labelled 'harassment', women's hazing is usually not recognised at all, especially by women. Only a small group of men interested in gendered behaviour are even aware that women harass as much as men. It is, however, reconstructed so that the derogatory term associated with it is applied to *men* who cannot resist a woman's demands. He, and not she, is labelled 'pussy-whipped'.[11]

I find it interesting that when a man hazes a woman we tend to blame him by labelling him a "harasser" or "stalker". When women haze men, the tendency is again to label (and blame) the man, rather than the woman, but this time using the word "pussy-whipped". When I asked Caroline if she could think of a word for a woman who repeatedly sends messages to men who never respond, her response was "desperate"!

It is worth stressing that hazing behaviour is as common within same-sex groups as cross-sex groups. Girls increasingly rely on verbal hazing to resolve their disputes in the playground (particularly in their teens) and continue this into adulthood. Boys, particularly those used to sporting environments, continue to resolve such battles through a mixture of verbal and physical confrontation.[12]

The issue, therefore, appears to be one of *consent and meaning*, not just actual behaviour. A new group member may see advantages in perpetuating the appearance of subordination as a strategy for gaining acceptance and influence within a group. The critical moment is when the submissive behaviour stops. If his or her peers accept the change then this indicates acceptance as a group member. But if hazing behaviour continues when the member does not consent, the social dynamic is oppressive (and the member has not yet been fully accepted).

At the other extreme, deliberate passivity (i.e. intentionally waiting for others to take initiatives) can be a powerful strategy for selecting and developing a person willing to accept responsibility for leadership. Both men and women can engage in this type of behaviour, but passivity is more often directed towards men to induce them to take a leading role in difficult, awkward or dangerous situations. It is particularly common when conflicts or threats to the group occur. It does not, however, necessarily indicate that the person has assumed a position of power (over their own life).

## The Power of Passivity

Last year, I listened to someone talking about their experiences studying nurses who broke bad news to bereaved relatives. What emerged was that male nurses, even though in a minority, usually broke bad news. They internalised this as a sign of their 'inherent' leadership skills, and also rationalised that relatives would probably prefer to hear bad news from a man.

What emerged from the interviews with female nurses, however, was that they did not like giving bad news and

routinely looked for a male nurse to do it for them. Who is the leader and who the follower? In the short term – in traditional (and gender-based) power terms – the *woman* is exercising power. Not only is she delegating a task but also exercising most control over her own life. In the longer term, however, the situation can change due to an accumulation of bottom-up leadership processes. Let me explain how this happens.

Repeated exposure to more difficult, challenging or dangerous tasks teaches interpersonal and learning skills – it prepares a person for career advancement. Such subtle processes, therefore, can result in emergent bottom-up leadership whereby the person who gets used to more challenging work develops skills that others do not acquire.

We once had discussions about this at Computercraft. At an annual review, the men and women broke into gender groups to discuss how sexism against women affected the workplace. There was a highly unusual outcome in the men's group and I reconstruct the dialogue below (you'll have to allow me a bit of licence here!):

*Brian:* *It pisses me off when people ring up and ask for the manager and expect it to be a man. It is demeaning to the women.*

*Henry:* *Yeah – I agree, but it means that we [the men] have to deal with the more difficult calls all the time. That pisses me off too.*

*Rory:* *Yes, the women are much better at empowering themselves. They say 'no' much more than we do!*

*Julian:* *That's right. If there is a problem with a client, it is usually you [points to Rory] or me who ends up having to deal with it. While they are empowering themselves by saying 'no' – we are landed with all the shit.*

*Henry:* *But maybe you get landed with this because people expect it of you.*

*Rory:* *I think what Phil is saying is that it is not just men who expect to speak to a man as manager, it is also an assumption amongst women, and also implicit in the way things work inside the company.*

*Brian:* *You mean that they want the men to do the harder jobs and deal with the most difficult customers?*

*Rory:* *Not necessarily. I mean that they want the option to pass something on if they feel they can't deal with it. They get to choose, but we don't. I'm not sure who is being discriminated against more – the women (for being ignored) or the men (for getting landed with the most difficult problems).*

The moral of this story, perhaps, is that men need to learn the value of saying 'no' as well. Moreover, we need to ask why men are more reluctant to say 'no', or why they like to say 'yes'. Is there a fear of being seen as weak? Is there a sexual dynamic inducing men behave in particular ways in the company of women? Have they already learnt that they will be disciplined (by both women and other men) if they say 'no' to a woman?

Emotion is important here. What the men believed (but may not have actually been true) was that the more threatening the call, the more likely it would be passed (or escalated) to a man. While we recognised the disrespect shown to our female colleagues, we also began to see the disrespect implicit in callers (male or female) feeling they could vent their anger more freely at a man than a woman. As our discussion developed, we got a sense that we had less choice over whether to accept it. We were expected to handle the anger of others. If we did not, others got angry at us.

It was about 5 years later that Mike identified three men as *de facto* leaders at Computercraft. This situation arose even when women constituted 50% of the directors and all had one vote in management meetings. "Followers", in this case mostly women, had become agents inducing leadership behaviours through various rewards (loyalty, flattery, money and sexual attention) *or*

repeated insistence that someone else deal with their most difficult problems.

Such behaviours encourage leaders to keep leading, to keep accepting responsibility when things go wrong. In turn, these *de facto* leaders improve their skills at dealing with complex situations but also got resentful and frustrated at feeling used by others. Herein lies the cause of some authoritarian confrontations (a battle of wills) between 'leaders' and 'followers' who seek to delegate responsibilities pushed onto them by "the other".

We can begin to see another way that firms and hierarchies develop – through a social process whereby people (employees, suppliers and investors) seek out and ally themselves with those who can be induced to accept responsibility. Through this process, wealth and responsibility are exchanged for followership. **Social organisation is driven by the search of many for the few who can generate wealth and handle conflicts.** And what if they stop generating wealth or refuse to handle conflicts? Typically, they are discarded by their followers who then search for a new leader.[13]

## Definitional Problems with 'Harassment'

It is for these combined reasons, that 'harassment' is a difficult concept to pin down. Taking initiatives becomes habitual behaviour of those working (or living) amongst others who like to avoid responsibility. What appears as harassment to a new group member might simply be habitual or "normal" behaviour that has been induced by "followers". There is much to be gained from exploring how one person's "harassment" can be another person's friendliness.

Men claim they do not take women seriously as potential *leaders* if they *resist subordination*, or place a higher value on their own well-being than the group they intend to serve. The main criticism is that women show themselves to be less willing to sacrifice themselves, put themselves in danger or take risks – qualities that men accept as the price of leadership.[14] The main criticism of men by women, however, is that such behaviour is "masculine", misogynist and rooted in a desire for

domination and control.[15] Clearly there needs to be a lively debate here because the "male" argument is that the ability to cope with "harassing" behaviour shows a person's *capacity and willingness to serve others* (i.e. cope with the demands of leadership), while the "female" argument is that "harassing" behaviour is a *desire to dominate others*. Which of these views is correct?

By constructing 'hazing' as "harassment", the process by which people have traditionally come to build high trust relationships (to prepare for collective working in dangerous situations) has become obscured and misunderstood. Hazing behaviour – while disliked – is not so much 'masculine' as a set of behaviours associated with preparation for dangerous and risky occupations. If a person is able to survive it, the result is a particularly high level of trust in that person. It is for this reason that hazing is most prevalent in occupations like the police, fire fighting, the armed forces, executive teams and politics. The question, however, remains why hazing also occurs in other environments? In student fraternities, for example, there is no *need* for it and yet it occurs. Is it a deeply ingrained anachronism, or does it serve another purpose?

"Harassment" might be any of the following: an act of personal violation to gain control through fear; behaviour that others consider over-friendly ("showing the ropes" too eagerly); a genuine interest to establish a lasting *and equitable* relationship (by testing out whether another will submit if challenged, or put up resistance). Accusations of harassment may be made to ward off or reduce the amount of unwanted attention, to avoid responsibility for previous actions, or a strategy to control and isolate 'weak' individuals.

Have you ever felt harassed or been accused of harassment? To what extent were your feelings to do with the behaviour of the other person, or *your feelings* about the other person? One criticism of 'harassment' claims is that the same behaviour from two different people is treated differently *by the accuser*. This raises the question of who is *really* doing the harassing…

As we saw earlier, genuine harassment results in weight-loss, headaches, anxiety, loss of sleep and fear. Did you experience these symptoms? Did you find ways to cope on your own or did you get help from others?

## A Second Case

Leadership and followership are more or less equally emotional. Let us use a second case to consider leader/follower dynamics. This case considers underlying sexual jealousies as well as formal relationships.

Andy, Simon and Neil established a small employee-owned company and proceeded to recruit three other staff. The ownership of the company was divided as follows:

- 41% Andy (Chief Executive)
- 40% SoftContact (UK) Ltd (sister business)
- 10% Simon (Sales and Marketing Manager)
- 8% Pauline, Gayle and Neil and Gary (other staff)
- 1% Private individuals

In 2002, due to falling sales, Simon started to disagree with Andy over the running of the company. I talked to four staff: Andy, Gayle, Pauline and Neil. I also retrieved the views of others from emails, letters, minutes and memos in various company files[16]. In early interviews, Pauline and Gayle expressed the view that problems started when Simon sought to take over the company:

*Pauline:* *He was always bringing this stuff into the meetings. I felt it was very personal, like he had a personal vendetta [against Andy].*

*Rory:* *Was he trying to persuade everybody?*

*Gayle:* *Yeah. He was quite open about it, yeah.*

*Rory:* *With everybody present? Or one at a time?*

*Gayle: A bit of both, really. He didn't seem to pick his moment - it was just at any possible opportunity.*

*Rory: Why do you think he was focussing on what was happening outside work?*

*Gayle: I think he was trying to make out that he was superior - he was working to further his own position. He was always destabilising things.*

*Rory: How calculating was this?*

*Pauline: Yeah, I think it was calculated. I think he was out to further his own career.*

Simon's attempt to become leader failed when he could not establish the support to win a vote of no-confidence in Andy. Andy remained unaware – until I interviewed him – that Simon had attempted a takeover.

Neil and Pauline expressed the view that the reason they did not support Simon was that he could not offer an alternative business plan. Gayle just felt "it was wrong" for Simon to work behind the scenes to take over the company. It is possible that existing staff were afraid how Andy would react, but this view was not expressed in interviews or company documents.

When Simon could not take over, he resigned as a director, but remained as an employee. Simon wrote to Andy the following:

*I have approached you before when I felt risk was being piled on me without having the authority to agree as you were taking these decisions yourself. I am no longer happy to take on this liability at a time when I have no confidence in the organisation to pull through without drastically downsizing. Although we set up the company as democratic, it has been run as a traditional small business with the major investor taking all the major decisions and not clearly defining the area of responsibility of the CEO. I feel this position is too powerful and should not be held by a director.*

Andy's response tells a rather different story:

*We discussed matters at a management meeting with you, Gayle and Neil. We then took external advice. I took some decisions as CEO. As the rules of the company, and the guidance notes make clear (see document 9 j) and k) attached – the CEO is responsible for management of the company and its employees, [while business planning and policy is decided collectively].*

*All job descriptions were prepared during the company induction and circulated to all members of staff for comment. All the comments were collated and updated by Gayle and the job descriptions were re-circulated to everyone upon their appointment. You have conducted my appraisal twice and not raised these issues.*

By resigning as a director, Simon felt that he could protect himself from the deteriorating trade situation using employment law. Taking advantage of his new status, he threatened to take the company to a tribunal for discrimination (the basis of which was never made clear, although there are hints that he intended to say he was discriminated against for his religious beliefs). Andy's frustration at Simon's changed behaviour comes through in a private email:

*In this company – democratic or not – everyone looks to me for leadership. I'm usually fine. If things are going well it feels good – naturally. However, to be threatened and accused when things go badly is crushing. I can cope – just. But if I must accept responsibility, I must be more choosey and careful in selecting staff. No lame ducks. No legal minded selfish bastards to fuck things up moaning about their 'rights' while they destroy the company.*

*I guess the law is right that an employer must consult employees before changing a contract but surely it is wrong when people risk everything to tie their hands while they watch their life savings going down the toilet because one member of staff looking out only for themselves holds their colleagues to ransom?*

The constraints on Andy came from changes in employment law. His professional advisers informed him

that employers were finding it impossible to win tribunals. Legal changes had been made in April 2002 that the burden of proof had switched to the employer to show that an employee had consented to each change in their employment contract. Andy also felt a burden from company law: if he ignored professional advice, he could personally become liable for all the debts of the company.

He considered ignoring professional advice, but came to the view that the company would go bankrupt if Simon made a claim (even if the company eventually won the case). After Simon's threat, the financial position of the company worsened because the potential liability had to be factored into management accounts. Andy called in an insolvency practitioner to advise. Two weeks later, the shareholders voted to close the company down.

While a power struggle between leaders is a tempting way to understand the above conflict, there is another explanatory framework which will be elaborated below. It weakens the idea that the above conflict was simply a power battle between Andy and Simon for control of the company. There is another, perhaps subliminal, domain of conflict.

## An Alternative Explanation

Andy was married to Susan, who worked elsewhere. During interviews, however, I uncovered a close relationship between Andy and Gayle. The changes this prompted in the relationship between *Simon* and Gayle were significant. The following is a conversation between Andy and Pauline (one of Gayle's work colleagues).

*Andy:* *Gayle came in very upset once after breaking up with her boyfriend. At that time she used to come in at the weekend quite often, sometimes on her own, sometimes when Neil and I worked. She'd been out drinking with an old friend, made a pass at him and he'd rejected her. I felt sorry for her so I wrote a funny poem to cheer her up.*

*Pauline:There was a lot of banter sometimes.*

*Andy: Yes, particularly early on – Simon used to try to flirt with Gayle a lot, but that seemed to change after she went to London with him. She felt he undermined her and raised it with me. She said she could cope and did not want me to intervene.*

*Pauline: Banter makes the office a pleasant place to be.*

*Andy: What is it about, though?*

*Pauline: It's not always about getting into bed. It makes the workplace tolerable and fun if people are sensible. I do it purely for the sport.*

*Andy: I remember Gayle once walked into the office and complained "why are there no good looking blokes around here?"*

*Pauline: Yes, you quickly interjected "present company excepted". I don't think she realised how offensive she sounded at times.*

*Andy: Yes. Gayle broke up with her boyfriend and Simon increased his attempts to flirt. Once he came on strongly and made a comment after which she responded contemptuously "in your dreams…."*

*I think that hurt him. Later that day she talked to me about not being able to sleep and said it was a shame other men were not as lovely as me. I was really taken aback at the contrast in how she talked to Simon and then to me. I grew fond of her after that.*

*When Simon later met Rebecca, he changed. He just seemed to want out.*

*Pauline: He married Rebecca, later, didn't he?*

*Andy: Yes, in late 2002, I think.*

*Pauline: Did your relationship with Gayle cause problems in your marriage?*

*Andy: Yes.*

*Pauline:You were having a hard time at home, weren't you?*

*Andy: I was struggling to come to terms with Susan's affair [Andy's wife]. As for Susan, I think that as long as the company existed, she could believe that Gayle and I were work friends. When we continued writing to each other after Gayle left the company, Susan felt threatened.*

*Pauline:Simon felt that you were too close to Gayle. I often wondered if Simon was jealous.*

*Andy: He saw me spending time - and sharing information - with Gayle rather than him. Did he feel threatened by Gayle, I wonder, by my closeness to her? Do you think his jealousy was purely business?*

*Pauline:No, No. He felt you were getting too close.*

*Andy: I thought that he wanted to keep Gayle out of the management group.*

The increasing intimacy between Gayle and Andy created an incentive for Simon to:

- control Andy (emotional desire to maintain/increase intimacy)
- discipline Gayle (emotional desire to decrease intimacy)

There is, however, another dynamic not known to any of the parties except those directly involved. Gayle was providing support for Andy to reconcile with his wife, Susan. Although Susan's workplace affair had ended, its impact on Andy and Susan's marriage was considerable. They had been extremely close and the affair damaged their friendship, not just their marriage.

Andy and Susan started going to Relate (a counselling organisation). Simon, whose own marriage had broken down after discovering that one of his children was not his own, had particularly strong feelings about how Andy should respond:

*Andy: I remember once talking to Simon in the kitchen. He offered to give Susan and I counselling. I backed off – the idea was totally laughable.*

*At that time, only Gayle was encouraging me to see things from Susan's point of view. Only Gayle seemed to be encouraging me to work things through with Susan. Simon told me that I should "take a man's point of view", but I responded that I wanted to get both men's and women's point of view.*

*Later, even Susan admitted that she owed a debt to Gayle, that she played a part in helping to save the marriage. At the time, however, emotions ran high across all these relationships.*

Taken as a whole, these backstage dynamics offer another explanation for leader and follower behaviour. Simon's performance was affected by a perception that he was losing power to Gayle (and could not compete with her on equal terms). He claims Andy was distracted by issues at home, but few others gave this view any credence. Nevertheless, it affected both Simon and Andy on personal and professional levels. Simon's own feelings towards Gayle were also a factor and we need to consider the possibility that he felt both personally and professionally rejected.

The power struggle between Simon and Andy, therefore, was underpinned by a value conflict rooted in gender issues. Neil and Simon objected to Gayle using her sexuality to gain influence, but used *class* prejudice to undermine her growing influence. Andy rejected their arguments, pointing out her competence, as well as the democratic commitments of the company. Neil and Simon, however, speculated that his views had more to do with sexual attraction.[17]

What are your views on power now you have read this chapter? Have you ever turned down a position because you did not want more responsibility? What impact did this have on others? Did you ever take a job because you wanted extra responsibility? Can you remember why you felt able to accept it? How did it affect other relationships? Did anyone become less friendly? Did anyone become friendlier? Did you feel lonelier or suddenly become the centre of attention?

## Reconsidering the Nature of Leadership

Theories of leadership typically define power as the ability to make another person do our bidding (i.e. power as control over others).[18] This conception of power in organisations, however, is rooted in the assumption that it is the purpose (and right) of managers to govern 'employees' in such a way that they subordinate their interests to the organisation's.

This chapter, however, illustrates the powerlessness that occurs when one party exercises power unilaterally, rather than bilaterally or through multi-party negotiations. A unilateral attempt to gain power removes power deeply embedded in a relationship. Usually no party benefits from the unilateral exercise of power (over the long term), while bilateral or multi-party decisions increase the power of all parties.

A relationship in which each party helps emancipate the other from cultural constraints is particularly powerful and productive. It then becomes spurious to talk of leaders and followers because each leads and follows as the situation demands and the leader in any particular context is determined by the situation.

Tony Watson summarises the outlook that underpins such an approach to management:

> *Productive cooperation…has to be striven for. It has to be brought forth from the working out of the vast diversity of projects being pursued by the various people in and around the organisation…The variety of orientations…and the range of expectations held by other stakeholders, means*

*that the productive cooperation which gives work organisations their rationale is essentially problematic…*

*Human beings…will not be drawn together into the sort of positive cooperative effort typically required by systems and rules alone. To contribute initiative and give commitment… the work needs to be made **meaningful** to people.*[19]

I would go further and argue that people are bound together, and driven apart, by emotional needs and desires. As discussed in Chapter 3, the more equitable the exchanges, the more attractive (seductive) each party appears to the other. It is this process that draws parties together, while the opposite process (unreciprocated behaviour, lack of engagement, unilateral withdrawal) that drives people apart.

These dynamics have implications for hierarchy development – and the dynamics between leaders and followers. Leaders and followers are drawn together when there are *mutual emotional (as well as economic) benefits,* and driven apart when these benefits disappear. This idea has been termed "emotional praxis" – a process by which people make decisions by giving regard to their emotional well-being.[20] Given that emotions are an integral component of all decision-making (see Chapter 2), it not surprising we should find that people are guided by emotional praxis.

In terms of leadership, the picture that emerges is that *pairs* and *groups* of people try to control those perceived as a threat to group life. In pursuit of this, they select the person best able to ward off any threat and promote them as leader. Leadership is not an individual process or quality. No leader stands in isolation to others.

Within a relationship or group, one party usually develops a public role (articulating concerns to those outside the relationship or group) while others have private roles (articulating concerns *inside* the relationship or fgroup). Men typically, but not necessarily or automatically, have more influence in the public domain. Women historically, but not necessarily or automatically,

are more powerful in the private domain. In Chapters 6 and 7, I will elaborate this further.

While we may not talk about our intimate relationships publicly, the emotions they arouse are stronger than other relationships. For this reason, governance dynamics (both inside and outside work) are responsive to hidden emotional needs, even when not in evidence or the subject of discussion. In the next chapter, the power of hidden emotions to affect governance processes is discussed.

## Summary

There are eight propositions from this chapter that I would like to suggest to you:

- Power is rooted in relationships, not individual people.
- Leadership is the regular expression in the public domain of matters taking place in the private domain.
- Leaders depend for their well-being, and derive their power from, the way they activate the emotions of their followers.
- Followers depend for their well-being, and derive their power from, the way they activate the emotions of their leaders.
- Leaders are expected to take greater public responsibility than followers for agreements made in private.
- Leaders are rewarded with a greater share of public recognition than followers for private agreements.
- Leaders are more powerful in the public domain, but less powerful in the private domain.
- Leaders lead in public matters, followers lead private matters.

I have suggested that leadership and followership are far more ambiguous – and interlinked – than conventional theories suggest. Often, it is hard to establish whether the followers are following the leader,

or the leader is following the followers. The above propositions provide some clarity about when and why this occurs.

In the next chapter, I examine sexual dynamics. When courtship behaviours mutate into sexual conflict, a set of double-standards are applied to men and women. The resolution process is based on the public/private distinctions above. It is by recognising the impact of this that we can begin to build a new path towards workplace (and gender) equality. In particular, there is a growing need to understand *women's* power, rather than men's. When we better understand women's power, and how it is exercised, the gender debate starts to take on a different complexion.

In particular, we end up asking the difficult question "do women and men actually **want** equality?" If they do, how is this understood and pursued? The different ways that men and women conceive and pursue equality influences the outcome of their efforts. It also generates the conflicts between them. To find out why, come with me on the most controversial part of our journey…

## Notes on Chapter 5

[1] Molloy, J. (2003) *Why Men Marry Some Women and Not Others,* Element.

[2] Landers, A. (1976). Ann Landers survey was run in 1200 papers and published in her syndicated column on January 23, 1976, cited in Farrell, W. (2001) *Father and Child Reunion,* Finch, p. 65

[3] Friedan, B. (1963) *The Feminine Mystique,* Penguin Books.

[4] Goldberg, H. (2000) *The Hazards of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege,* Wellness Institute, Chapters 5 and 8.

[5] Farrell, W. (2001) *Father and Child Reunion,* Sydney: Finch Publishing, Chapter 4.

[6] Provine, R. (2000) *Laughter: a scientific investigation,* Penguin.

[7] Duberley, E. (2005), *Brief Encounters: A Woman's Guide to Casual Sex,* Fusion Press, p.135.

[8] Provine, R. (2001) *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation,* Penguin Books, p. 28.

[9] Nuwer, H. (ed) (2004) *The Hazing Reader,* Indiana University Press. See also Ackroyd, S., Thompson, P. (1999) *Organizational Misbehaviour,* Sage Publications and Farrell, W. (2005) *Why Men Earn More,* New York: Amacom.

[10] Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power,* Bantam Books. In the chapter on "The Politics of Sex", the author explains how this leads to a 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' situation for men much more frequently than for women.

[11] Vitalio, D. (2005) *Recognising When You Are Pussy-Whipped,* Internet newsletter, 12th April, 2005.

[12] Goleman, D. (1998) *Emotional Intelligence*, Bloomsbury. For extended discussion of behaviour in all-female contexts, see Cairns, R. B., Cairns, B. D. (1994) *Lifelines and Risks,* New York, Cambridge University Press. For discussion of behaviour in all-male contexts see Roy, D. (1960) "'Banana time' – job satisfaction and informal interactions", *Human Organisation,* 18(2), pp. 156-168.

[13] John Hall, business adviser at the BBIC, South Yorkshire, mentored me for several years. He once told me that most CEOs in public companies had one year to establish their reputation or they would be sacked. Similarly, men who refused to fight in wartime have been routinely killed or imprisoned *by members their own society* throughout history. Women also shun them and give them white

features (a symbol of cowardice). For a powerful drama on the unforgiving nature of organisations towards their leaders see 'Darrow' (2001), Arrow Films.

14 Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power,* Bantam Books.

15 Dworkin, A. (1976) *Woman Hating,* Dutton Books. See also Hearn, J. and Parkin, W. (1987) *Sex At Work: the power and paradox of organisation sexuality*, Wheatsheaf.

16 These were retrieved from the insolvency practitioners in 2004. Three files existed; two on company set-up that had correspondence on the background and trading relationships used to establish the company; one had human resource documents, interviews, letters, memos and correspondence.

17 The knock-on effects on their careers were established from personnel records and interviews. Neil was unemployed for considerable lengths of time after the company collapse. Eventually, he went back into Higher Education to re-qualify for a new career. Pauline found a new job and developed her career in marketing. Simon got a new job as a project manager, but left for reasons unknown shortly afterwards. Gayle developed a successful career as a manager. Andy successfully entered academia.

18 French, J., Raven, B. (1958) "The bases of social power" in D. Cartwright (ed), *Studies in Social Power,* Institute of Social Research, Ann Arbor, MI. Lukes, S. (1974) *Power: A Radical View,* Macmillan Education.

19 Watson, T. (1994) *In Search of Management,* Routledge, pp. 32-33.

20 Crossley, N. (1998) "Emotion and communicative action" in G. Bendelow and S. J. Williams (eds) *Emotions in Social Life,* London: Routelege.

# Chapter 6 – Sexual Conflict

## Introduction

In the previous chapter, we considered some of the subtle processes that take place between leaders and followers. In the workplace, these dynamics typically play out between entrepreneurs and employees in small companies, or between managers and team members in larger organisations. Our dependence on leaders inclines us to see them as "dominant" – those with control over resources and the power to decide our future are "in control". But we also discussed that leaders can feel extremely vulnerable, that they have to put up with criticism that deeply affects their emotions. Sometimes this builds up so much that they resort to authoritarian behaviours in order to re-establish control over their feelings and stop others from engaging in personal attacks.

It is our understanding of managers as "dominant" rather than "powerless" that impacts on dispute resolution. When a manager has power over a subordinate (or a temporary member of staff) the courts typically take the view that it would be impossible for the subordinate to cause the manager any distress because the manager can discipline the subordinate. However, in this chapter we will see that managers do sometimes accuse subordinates, and when they do, the conflicts raise substantive questions about the way we understand power and conflict.

The first half of this chapter is based on a case that occurred after the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 came into force and the women's movement was in full flow. There are three small changes that I have made to the story – these changes will be revealed to you in due course and I withhold them initially because they provide the starting point for learning in the second half of the chapter.

In the second half of the chapter, I review findings from recent research to provide further insights into two other sexual conflicts that touched me personally. By the end of the chapter, you will have three contrasting perspectives: the views of someone from inside a sexual conflict; the views of a manager investigating a sexual conflict; the views of an external investigator trying to make sense of how managers handle sexual conflict.

I am indebted to Amy, a co-researcher, who retained papers and lent them to me to help with this chapter. The first story is constructed from memos, contemporaneous notes and reflections, letters to managers and solicitors and the responses that these provoked. I clarified matters with Amy and she added anecdotes to create a richer understanding of a relationship she had with Mark. Amy is satisfied that it is a fair reflection of her own understanding of the events that occurred.

The first draft was then sent to all parties in the dispute. Some contributed comments and the chapter was updated to reflect their views. No account of a dispute can be completely balanced but every effort has been made to give all parties the opportunity to comment. It is, therefore, balanced beyond a reasonable doubt.

The correspondence has been edited to remove details of the organisation's work, as well as the technicalities of the project on which Amy and Mark worked. This gives the impression that Amy's and Mark's relationship was more informal that it actually was. For ethical and legal reasons, true identities have been obscured.

## A Story of Sexual Conflict

Some years ago, Amy enrolled on a Masters course to study business. Prior to this, she was an analyst in a multi-national company working on mini-computer systems before leaving to run a small company of her own. A decade later she could not make this fit in with family life so she closed the company and worked on a self-employed basis for her former clients. Married for 16 years to Shaun, she found self-employment suited her and gave her more flexibility. They had two children

together, so Amy reduced her work commitments to two days a week, and cared for the children on the other days while undertaking a course of study.

The following year, Amy's academic studies were going well so she transferred to a doctoral programme. She started a detailed study of the link between feminist theory and changing business practice. When she met Mark two years later, she was writing up her PhD. No longer doing field work, she took on a commitment to develop a database system for him between June and October of that year.

Mark was a middle manager with a public relations role at one of the UK's leading charities. He was college educated and had found work in a multi-national company after obtaining his degree. He developed his career there, but eventually opted to head a marketing initiative. When he met Amy, he was in his thirties, engaged to be married but had chosen to delay having children. Amy was in her forties, but – according to her friends - had aged well.

When Amy first met Mark, she felt an instant rapport. During her research she had come across studies of body language that interested her. All the signs of mutual admiration were in evidence: strong unbroken eye contact and plenty of it; comfort and ease at talking; positive aligned body posture; open gestures, smiling and some willingness to speak about personal issues.

If Mark left the office before Amy, he would catch her eye and wave to her on his way out. As a consultant, Amy liked to see this kind of behaviour because it indicated that the initial rapport was being maintained. In the past, such rapport underpinned working relationships that had spanned over a decade so she thought the signs were promising.

There was one aspect, however, that slightly unsettled her. Mark liked to tease her. On the third occasion they met – the first of many occasions when Amy had to stay overnight in a hotel, Mark commented as they left a lift:

*So, did you go out on the town last night?*

It sounded like a challenge and Amy was not sure how to respond. She slightly resented the implication that she

was some kind of "party girl" but politely explained that staying overnight was not all it was cracked up to be. She usually read, watched TV, or studied. Amy regarded herself – and was regarded by her husband - as a confident but private person. She had become supportive of the women's movement for emancipation and sought new ways to combine working life with parenthood.

**Many writers comment on the role of humour and teasing during the development of a relationship.**

**Derek Vitalio, a populist writer, argues that playful teasing hurts a person's ego and that they often respond by trying to impress the teaser. If the teaser recognises their efforts (and stops teasing), they enhance their attractiveness by becoming a source of emotional pleasure.**

**Academics, however, offer different explanations. Dr Lillian Glass warns that teasing is a sign of hostility, possibly even past trauma, a view partially supported by Dr Warren Farrell in his discussion of 'hazing'. However, he points out that it also establishes how a person will react if threatened. This is normal behaviour for men – and increasingly in women - in the development of high trust relationships expected to face future danger.**

**Professor Tony Watson looks at the issue from the perspective of the teaser. His explanation suggests that humour is a good strategy for reducing fear – it derives from a desire to protect against emotional, financial or physical hurt.**

**My own study indicates that all may be true in different contexts. Some explanations apply in the early stages of a relationship , where there may be a lack of trust, but later in the process, it is an invitation to consensual play that enhances intimacy, physical closeness and sexual pleasure.**

The friendly and playful nature of their working relationship is apparent immediately in their memos to each other.

*Hi Amy,*

*Enclosed is our full set of admin procedures. There is a lot (22 pages of them!) ….hopefully you will get a chance to skim the relevant sections before our next meeting, either that or I am sure it will be effective in sending you to sleep on the train….*

*Thanks, Mark*

---

*Mark,*

*Procedures? Send me to sleep? Lord forbid! My diary is free on 20th July if that is a possible date to have a first look at the database structure.*

*Amy*

At this time, the IRA was setting off bombs at London train stations and Amy's husband and children were concerned that she should not travel by public transport.

*Mark,*

*With the bomb threats in London, would it be possible to park at your offices if I choose to drive down on Tuesday? My family would feel a little more comfortable, I think, if I can avoid using public transport.*

*Amy*
*x*

*Amy,*

*Quite understand, if I could work from home believe me I would love to. Michelle has reserved a space for you. When you arrive just check with reception.*

*See you around 11.30 ish.*

*Mark*

They had a good meeting, and the humour continued.

*Hi Mark,*

*I enclose the document we discussed, with revisions. I felt everyone contributed well, and the intelligent comments towards the end of the day indicated that everyone had grasped aspects of the underlying design. The process of design is quite intense, but over the years I've discovered that it creates realistic expectations. Sometimes it is (almost) interesting!!*

*Amy*
*x*

*---*

*Amy,*

*Thanks. I like the bit about our intelligent comments!!! We will all sit down and go through as it's a lot to take in and try to imagine how it will all work. I will be in touch before I*

*go off on hols and once the licensing issues have been resolved it is all looking very promising.*

*Speak soon and have a good weekend,*

*Mark*

## First Cause for Concern

Amy had given Mark her home number so they could discuss issues when not in the office. In Amy's notes, she recalls the following:

*Mark was calling me at home quite a bit – much more than any other client. The impression I got was that he was calling me more than he needed to, and it struck me at the time how often he seemed to chat about little things that did not seem important, or which we had already covered in meetings. Then I received the following memo:*

*Hi Amy,*

*I have tried to call you but you are obviously skiving on this Friday afternoon!! I just wanted to talk through stuff for next week so I will try to summarise….*

*….Although I am on annual leave I am not flying off anywhere exotic so if you need to get in touch with me please do, as I would much rather things go smoothly now - the sooner it is set up the better. Sophie has my home number if you need to get in touch and as I bask in the garden I will try to help!!*

*Phew think that's it – have fun now!!*

Amy looked after her children on Fridays and found the "skiving" remark a bit disrespectful. The last paragraph also seemed a bit over-familiar, particularly the "bask in the garden" phrase that reinforced comments Mark had made in the office that he would be sunbathing. She also wondered if Mark was trying to give her his home phone number. Amy liked Mark and taken together, she felt flattered by the attention he was giving her. Nevertheless, she felt she should be positive but

cautious and decided to respond to his comments with good humour.

*Mark,*

*Skiving? Me? As a researcher / consultant / mother, I keep very abnormal hours and frequently take days off to compensate for the 16 hour ones when I travel around.*

*Enjoy basking in the garden and I definitely look forward to seeing a bronzed version of your good self the following week.*

*Best wishes*

*Amy*
*x*

Mark's behaviour played on Amy's mind, and she wondered if Mark was developing an attraction to her. After a series of messages exchanging technical information, she tested the water by asking him "did you get a good tan basking in the sun?" Mark seemed to cool off a bit, so Amy carried on corresponding without making any further references to his holiday.

The next time Amy visited, however, Mark playfully asked Amy to make him a cup of tea. Amy, probably because of age, skills and qualifications, was usually treated as a guest by clients – it was rare she was asked to make tea or coffee. However, she obliged and decided to accept the norms within the team.

## Banter Over Lunch

Amy normally took lunch with her clients – it was an unwritten assumption that she and they would get to know each other informally. Mark, however, had not engaged her outside the office even though his memos were usually upbeat. This surprised Amy because she had worked for Mark's organisation for 9 years (on and off) and the norm with other staff was that either they or she would initiate lunch. Thereafter the norm was that each would take turns to pay. Amy, wondering if Mark was a bit shy, took the initiative and offered to take both Mark and his assistant Sophie to lunch early in September.

Amy wanted to raise the equality issues so in her next letter she wrote:

*Look forward to seeing you in September, producing a quality system, and practising gender awareness by smiling a lot while making you cups of tea and coffee! Do male managers take their commitment to equal opportunity sufficiency seriously to overcome their shyness and take female friends/colleagues out to lunch? Definitely hope so.*

*Will come back from holiday reinvigorated, ready to work hard, and looking healthier than I feel (!!)*

When I interviewed Amy, she said that she was attempting to make a serious point by poking fun at the gender issues of tea making and paying for lunch – each had to work both ways. The next time Amy visited, Mark suggested meeting after work to exchange information about the project. In light of his earlier comments, Amy was not completely comfortable with this. A working lunch was one thing, but meeting after work was quite another, so she politely declined and said she would return to the office if she had time.

It is worth noting at this point that the behaviour is similar to Ben and Hayley (Chapter 3) and not dissimilar to my own behaviour towards John. Both parties intersperse caution with complimentary remarks (or behaviours) to test the others' response and make efforts to supplement their formal relationship with safe opportunities for informal contact.

After the lunch with Mark and Sophie. Amy wrote:

*I let Mark choose and he took us to an Italian restaurant. It was a lot more expensive than the places I usually went with other members of staff, but as I had offered I felt I should honour the promise. The bill came to much more than I usually pay. At the end of the meal, he asked me if it was okay for me to pay. I said it was okay because he could pay next time. There was not a 'next time' however, even though I hinted playfully two or three times.*

*Mark dressed completely differently on this day. Gone was the suit and tie – he was dressed in jeans and a black short-sleeve shirt which was undone at the neck.*

*I remember thinking that he would not have looked out of place in a night-club. I nearly said something but thought it may be taken the wrong way.*

*Lunch was full of banter – some of it about my work on gender issues. We discussed a novel I was writing about a false-allegation of sexual harassment. Mark asked if I had found anyone to read it, and I said I had. Our arms touched once in the restaurant and I remember the sexual tension. Back at the office the sexual tension continued. At one point, he put his hand on my shoulder (I was working with my back towards him). I felt this was familiar and a sign that he was attracted to me. He leant towards me and I could see his muscular chest. It had an impact on me but I did not say anything or respond in any way.*

In the memos that followed the lunch, the good humour returns and they joke about the pressures of the project as well as Amy's enjoyment watching the Ashes cricket series. Amy admits that she sent a slightly flirty memo, one that challenged Mark to return lunch, by asking:

*If I smile sweetly when I bring you a cup of tea, and flutter my eyelashes at you, I wonder if you'll take me to lunch?*

Mark, however, did not respond leaving Amy feeling somewhat exploited. However, as the project was going well she decided to take a 'live and let live' approach and resolved not to raise the issue until the project was complete, nor to suggest lunch without first tackling Mark over taking turns to pay.

Amy wrote a long letter about the project progress and Mark responded by joking about her typing skills. As Amy explained:

*Mark,*

*For my sins I learnt to touch type when I was younger. Did it make sense to you?*

*Things will look as if they've moved on rapidly next week – but the development may unravel when we test it!! Hope*

*the process is not too frustrating in the short term – it will pay dividends in the longer term, I promise (famous last words….).*

*Not sure whether you were showing genuine interest in reading the novel I've written, but thought you could read the synopsis and let me know if it interests you.*

*Bit nervous about you reading it, given we have a professional working relationship to protect. If you are interested, I would be interested in your feedback (target market is definitely professional men), but I would feel more comfortable after the project is complete! On reading, your opinion of me might change (for better or worse!) and I would not want that to interfere with our working relationship.*

*Amy*
*x*

## The End Game

The remainder of the project went smoothly – the humour, while slightly more cautious, is still evident in the correspondence. Mark did not respond to Amy's novel synopsis so she felt she had probably misjudged his interest and busied herself completing her work.

During her penultimate visit, Amy noticed that Mark was particularly sensitive when she suggested that Sophie may like working with him. She apologised for any "inappropriate" remarks and protected his ego by implying he was good company. Mark became more friendly again and started offering to make her coffee each morning. Over the last few weeks, Amy felt things went well.

Mark's confidence seemed to return. He chatted about his home life a bit and started to tease Amy again – this time that she must be stealing papers from his desk because he could not find them. Amy parried by saying:

*Do I not have a trustworthy face?*

After this, the correspondence remains formal but friendly. Amy wrote to finalise outstanding project issues and advise Mark on budgets for future work. As the project was ending – not withstanding her earlier feelings - she suggested a departmental lunch or drink after work to celebrate a successful outcome. Lastly, she asked Mark to formally accept the system so that she could submit her final invoice. In Mark's final memo to Amy, he accepts these suggestions and signs off the system:

*Hi Amy,*

*Thanks for this – reassuring to know we won't have huge fees coming out of our very tight budgets. Yes, I agree the system is now live. I will arrange an end of project meeting when you come in to sort out the final updates.*

*Thanks Amy and speak soon.*

With the project ending, Amy relaxed. She reflected on things and felt a need to resolve tensions that had emerged. Despite some irritating habits, Amy had grown quite fond of Mark. At the same time, the gender equality issues bothered her because she felt they were preventing the informal engagement necessary for a better working relationship. While wishing to communicate that she admired him, she wanted to raise the way he sometimes made disrespectful comments. Secondly, she wanted to extend the hand of friendship but set boundaries that would stop him thinking she sought a romance. This was her attempt:

*Mark,*

*It has been very enjoyable working with you, and I look forward to a productive relationship for as long as we continue to work for the organisation. It is particularly pleasant working with someone who is intelligent, attractive and competent. Deadly combination that inspires me to give my best (pathetic female that I am).*

*I still, however, can't work out if your organisation only runs half a course in gender-equality or whether you are too shy to know me socially. As for me, I have a strong marriage and we allow each other to enjoy friendships with both men*

*and women. Funnily enough, he prefers female friends while I prefer men friends. I can't think why – I guess we need to go on one of those gender-awareness courses so we can start to understand.*

*Oh well, back to the hum-drum of work. I'm in another department on Tuesday (1st), just need to know whether to book a hotel.*

*All the best*

*Amy*
*x*

At this point, consider how you would handle this situation if either Amy or Mark came to you as a manager. How you would answer if Mark came to you saying he found the above letter offensive? How would you advise Amy if she raised Mark's behaviour over the course of the project? Do you feel that either Mark or Amy have behaved unprofessionally? Write down your thoughts then we can compare your notes with what happened next.

## Management Intervention

On 4th November, Jerry, the head of the IT department, called Amy and told her that Mark had complained that she had been "unprofessional". Without seeking Amy's opinion, informing her of the nature of the allegation, or giving her a chance to respond, she was informed that after 9 years her contract was being terminated. She was asked to return all equipment and information in her possession, and not to visit the site again. In particular, she was asked not to contact Mark who was "distressed" by her behaviour.

Amy thought there must be some mistake and asked for time to respond. She went home and wondered whether to talk to her husband, Shaun. The client was important – a considerable part of their family income came from working for them so Amy was concerned on

several fronts. She decided to confide in Shaun and the children what had happened.

In replying to Jerry, Amy's first reaction was to apologise then ask for mediation to resolve the difficulties.

*Jerry,*

*Thank you for your call today, and I appreciated it being you who broke the news. I would be grateful if you could forward this memo to your CEO and the head of HR, and any other party who needs to know. If they feel it is appropriate for Mark to see a copy, I would have no objection.*

*Firstly, I would like to apologise for any distress my behaviour has caused. Secondly, I would like to request immediate mediation between myself and Mark next Tuesday….*

The letter was quite long and made a number of points.

- That Amy needed time to think and reflect on the correspondence between herself and Mark.
- That terminating the contract would impact on all parties badly.
- That it "is not reasonable or fair to terminate contracts without hearing both sides of a story…"
- That her intention was to "create a light-hearted atmosphere in which a relaxed, thriving, productive relationship could develop."
- That she had studied workplace culture and was aware of the "tensions and ambiguities that exist between men and women at work."
- That, from Amy's perspective she was "**responding** to aspects of Mark's behaviour and trying to deal with the ambiguities that arose."
- That at no time did Mark show any distress at her behaviour or ask her to stop.

- That she had "acted appropriately and professionally during all visits", particularly when alone with Mark.

- That the first thing Mark had done on her previous two visits was invite her to have a coffee with him and engage in informal chat about their home life.

Drawing in no small part on what she had learnt from her studies, she concluded the letter as follows:

*Speaking only for myself, I feel it is only when we are honest that others have a chance to express their own feelings to establish a respectful relationship. I waited until work was largely completed before attempting to deal with the tensions that arose after we had lunch together. If, in your opinion, this is unprofessional and unacceptable, I can modify my behaviour for the future and seek an opportunity to do so.*

She repeated her request for mediation so that a solution that would "benefit all parties" could be found. The following week she summarised the relationship to Jerry as follows:

*I wish to assert clearly and unambiguously that I was not seeking a "sexual relationship". I was seeking the kind of relationship I have with Louise, Brian and yourself. Earlier correspondence has to be understood in the light of Mark's behaviour towards me by phone, in memos and the office. He teased me playfully quite a few times and my messages are playful responses to these. There were occasions when he invaded my private space, by touching me for example, and it is reasonable therefore to assume that he was comfortable with a fairly close working relationship. My comment about his tan – if he has shown this to you – is a response to his own message telling me he would be sun-bathing on holiday. I felt any sexual banter was two-way, although I may have misunderstood him at times.*

In this letter, Amy offered ways for the organisation to verify her account – by talking to other members of staff within Mark's department. Jerry spoke to Amy again and she once more urged him to arrange mediation. Later

that week, however, Amy received the following from Jerry:

> *Thank you for your recent detailed correspondence. The issues you raised have been considered at senior level within the organisation. I am afraid, having reflected on the points raised, that we do not feel that mediation is either appropriate or desirable in this situation. We genuinely feel that it is in the best interests of all parties concerned, including yourself, that this matter now be closed and that no further correspondence be sent by you to us on this matter. We trust you will understand our position on this matter and will respect our decision. Please rest assured that this matter will remain confidential amongst the parties involved to date.*

Amy was gutted and discussed the issues with Shaun. After a few days, they started rowing about the situation because Shaun believed that Amy must have sexually harassed Mark. Amy gave all her correspondence to Shaun to satisfy him. He read it, but felt "there must be something more". Getting sacked indicated some kind of gross misconduct, but Shaun could not see any. Rows continued to break out periodically because Amy felt Shaun was not giving her support, while Shaun felt Amy must be hiding something. Over time, things improved, but their marriage was disrupted.

Right! Second chance for you to grab a pen and paper and make some notes about your views. Imagine you are a lawyer, manager or HR professional. You need to give legal advice to your directors and personal advice to Mark and Amy on the implications of this situation. Do you think that Amy or Mark have a case for sex discrimination? Perhaps you think both got what they deserved and neither have a case? Perhaps you think one party is more to blame than the other? Write down the advice you would give to Amy and Mark, then write the advice you would give to your board of directors.

## Obtaining Legal Advice

Amy – as a former Chief Executive – had experience of investigating sexual harassment cases. Once, she sought professional advice during a difficult dispute. An expert in the resolution of gender-conflicts confirmed that a manager, or management group, can only protect both men and women if they investigate both party's claims properly. Moreover, this was an employer's obligation under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 because it deterred both harassment (women's main concern) and false claims (men's main concern) by creating a culture in which all employees would understand that sexual claims would be subject to scrutiny.

Amy, therefore, wrote out the case she thought she had:

- Mark's distress might have been caused either by offence at her memo or feelings of rejection when she mentioned her "strong marriage".

- Amy herself was as distressed as Mark, had lost weight and suffered successive sleepless nights. The organisation had to treat her claims in the same way as Mark's or it would be *de facto* sex discrimination.

- Amy had offered the organisation a way to check her account, but they had not done so. She had documentary evidence from a person inside the organisation that they had not checked her explanation.

- Amy argued that Mark's employer could not establish who was doing the harassing (if any) and who being victimised (if any) without considering and verifying both accounts of the relationship.

- Amy argued that the decision to terminate the contracts without any face-to-face discussion or mediation amounted to protecting Mark and victimising her – a breach of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Okay. Do you have your advice at the ready? Let's now compare it to the advice that Amy received.

## The Legal Position

Amy approached a local company of solicitors. Lester Black, the solicitor assigned to consider her claim, advised Amy that she had a weak case. Although he recognised that Mark had initiated a change of tone by saying he would 'bask in the garden' on holiday, and that Amy had quite reasonably asked for mediation, as a self-employed person she could not claim unfair dismissal. As for defamation, Mark had not made a statement that Amy could prove was untrue. Lastly, Amy would struggle to win a case for sex discrimination because she had not told Mark he was in breach of the Sex Discrimination Act. Moreover, Lester commented that a tribunal would most likely regard her attempted humour over payment for lunch as an attempt to flirt or form a relationship, rather than an attempt to raise the issue of gender inequality.

Amy was disappointed that the solicitor did not seem to understand her perspectives but took the advice on board and wrote to the CEO of Mark's organisation claiming they had breached the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 by failing to investigate her claims properly. She then repeated her request for mediation and received the following response:

> *I am afraid I have nothing to add to the decision already communicated to you and would reiterate that we now see this matter as closed. We would ask you return any property including data, should you have it.*
>
> *I would once again ask that you respect our decision in this and that we receive no further letters on this matter from you.*

Amy decided – after considerable reflection – not to treat the matter as "closed." She wrote to Mark asking him to support mediation, then back to the CEO, and also the Board of Directors. She also informed the Head of Human Resources and asked for mediation. In response,

she got a solicitor's letter that "strongly recommended" she desist from sending any more letters.

So Amy contacted a women's rights organisation to obtain the name of a more sympathetic solicitor. She also found out that Mark's employer published a booklet recommending mediation in disputes. Surely their behaviour was incongruent with the advice they gave to others? She contacted the second solicitor and sent all her papers.

Kevin Yates, the second solicitor, made several points in response:

- Given the evidence, he would not differ from Lester Black's advice.
- He disagreed with Lester Black that the "bask in the garden" comment initiated the change of tone in the relationship.
- Amy would struggle on the evidence to persuade a tribunal that Mark initiated or welcomed her comments.
- Amy's mention of Mark's change of clothing for the day of their lunch would not assist her case.

In addition to these comments, Kevin added that he did not think the kind of banter Amy and Mark had was inevitable, or welcome, as a way of developing relationships between men and women at work. As he was running a business, he had to weigh up the likely costs involved and could not take on a no-win, no-fee basis any case where he was not confident of success. In short, Kevin Yates agreed with Lester Black that Amy's case was weak.

Amy felt the solicitor's comment that the relationship had an "inappropriate tone" and "would disagree….that this kind of banter is inevitable" impossible to sustain after her 3 year study of workplace culture. Not only was sexual banter and behaviour rife in sales work, marketing strategies, corporate events (internal as well as external), it permeated office relations and working life, although the impacts were denied (or ignored) in organisations concerned about their image.

The issue for Amy was not whether or not banter should be stopped but *how we choose to respond to it when it occurs*. Although she felt she did not habitually flirt at work, if a man gave her attention, or teased her, she had to choose how to respond. She chose to be constructive and find emotionally honest ways of preserving relationships.

The solicitor's position on "appropriate" behaviour was a moral argument, and could be adopted as a management policy, but neither were sustainable in light of the many studies that Amy had reviewed and conducted. Even though Amy informed both solicitors that she held a doctorate on gender dynamics in the workplace, neither solicitor acknowledged or enquired how Amy's expert status in the field might help build her case. This added to Amy's feeling that she, as well as her knowledge, was being disrespected and demeaned.

## Discussion

In your opinion, did the outcome of this case amount to sexual harassment (or discrimination) by either Mark or Amy against the other? Was your advice to Amy or Mark that they should drop the issue, learn the lessons, and "move on"?

Do you think Amy might have a case against the solicitors for misadvice? Why did they not tell her to make a formal complaint to the organisation's trustees/directors? Why was she not told by either solicitor that – as a self-employed worker – she would have employee status under the Sex Discrimination Act and be entitled to equal treatment? Why did they not inform her that, by lodging a claim to an Employment Tribunal, she could obtain information the other party was withholding? Why did they not inform her that she could bring a claim at an Employment Tribunal without legal representation and that it would cost her nothing to do so? In short, were the solicitors acting in Amy's best interests, or Mark's?

As we reviewed earlier, a range of studies have estimated that somewhere between 40-70% of men and women meet their long-term partners in a workplace

setting. Many more have aspirations to do so and attempt (without success) to form a successful relationship at work. In organisations concerned with professionalism, or public appearances, workplace relationships are conducted covertly rather than openly, but occur all the same[1]. We also noted that different studies put the frequency of initiation by women between 65-90%.

When I showed Amy's and Mark's correspondence to a consultant with 30 years experience of gender issues, she felt that one possible reason for Mark's distress was that he had developed strong feelings for Amy, and the latter's mention of her "strong marriage" took away Mark's hopes for a closer relationship. Amy felt happily married. Mark was 'engaged' but had not yet set a date for the wedding or started a family. Did he have doubts about his own relationship? Amy had her children and enjoyed parenthood. What were Mark's views and aspirations?

These questions, and their impacts on Amy's and Mark's relationship, are unclear. They may or may not have impacted on their attitude to each other. If he felt rejected, Mark may have selectively reconstructed Amy's responses, characterised her behaviour as "unprofessional" in order to transfer responsibility for feelings of hurt. He may not have intended that his complaint result in Amy's sacking - perhaps he just wanted to make a point and stop her flirting with him. His distress might have been genuine, but the reason for it is open to question, particularly given his behaviour immediately before making a complaint. I leave you to consider whether his alleged distress was caused by Amy's memo or whether it was an outcome of feelings of rejection.

As a manager, how would you handle this situation? Would you have sacked Amy? Or would you have sacked Mark? Would you have offered both support independently? Or would you have insisted on mediation? Add your answer to those you made earlier.

## The Impact of the Women's Movement

It is a testament to the strength of the women's movement that stories like the above are rarer today. It is hard to imagine that in 2005, a woman in Amy's position would have been unable to persuade Mark, and his employers, to mediate and reach an equitable resolution. Women may still be subject to various forms of discrimination, but termination of a contract for paying someone a compliment is highly improbable today.[2]

Earlier, I mentioned that the story had been altered in three respects to generate further debate. It is now time to reveal what was changed. Firstly, this is not a story from the past – it took place between June 2005 and December 2005 – a few details were amended to maintain the fiction (e.g. IRA bombings rather than anti-Iraq war bombings, memos not emails). The behaviour characteristics of men and women 30 years ago are alive and kicking in our society. On the basis of this story, it is still hard for people to get organisations to mediate gender conflicts in a way that leads to an equitable outcome.

The second alteration is the gender of all the main characters. Mark's true identity is Sarah[3], a middle manager at the International Council for Social Economy (ICSE). The solicitor Lester Black was, in fact, a woman called Leanne. The solicitor Kevin Yates was, in fact, a woman called Karen, a solicitor recommended by a men's web-site. Lastly, Amy's real identity is Rory Ridley-Duff. How far did you read before you guessed?

> Now you realise that the gender of all the main characters is the reverse of your earlier assumption, does this change any of the advice you were prepared to give? How do you now regard the actions of senior managers and the advice of the solicitors?

# Confronting the Double-Standard

At the start of the chapter, I said that I would withhold aspects of the case to stimulate learning in the second

part of the chapter. I trust that, at this moment, you are a little shocked or surprised but that no permanent damage will be done. If you need a moment to recover, by all means make yourself a cup of tea – I can wait a few minutes for you to get your bearings.

This book is about how to learn from our emotions. Consider yours at this very second. How angry were you at the behaviour of Mark and Amy? Did you feel Amy was using Mark for sport? Did you feel Mark was behaving like a male chauvinist? Would you have felt the same way if you had known that Mark was actually Sarah, and Amy was actually me?

How angry were you at Mark for making Amy pay for lunch, and accusing Amy of "unprofessional" behaviour? Would you have leapt to her defence? If so, will you now understand men who feel exploited when people take advantage of their position or wealth? Will you defend them against accusations of "unprofessional" behaviour with equal vigour?

Were you angry at Amy? Do you feel that she was 'playing' with Mark's feelings? Now that you know Amy was a man, will you be more forgiving of women who hurt men's feelings and trigger their anger when an offer of professional friendship is mistaken for a sexual advance?

Talking to my wife, Caroline, about her reactions to the story was revealing. As we drove home from her workplace, she told me how angry she felt at Mark making Amy pay for lunch and then not returning the favour. "It was just not on," she said, "he was behaving like a gigolo, exploiting her – it was almost harassing". She squeezed my hand as I drove because prior to this she thought my upset over the lunch was at best a "fuss over nothing", at worst a feeble attempt to flirt. Now she understood why I felt sexually exploited and angry at the hypocrisy of the allegation.

My own reactions taught me something too. Firstly, Mark comes across not only as hard working and career-oriented, but also slightly bitter (about having to work) as well as disrespectful to an experienced consultant. It made me look at Sarah in a new way – that perhaps she had not deserved my goodwill. Amy, on the other hand came across as more flirty than I expected. It made me

realise how my behaviour – because I had not been clear about my reasons for it – could be misinterpreted as unprofessional.

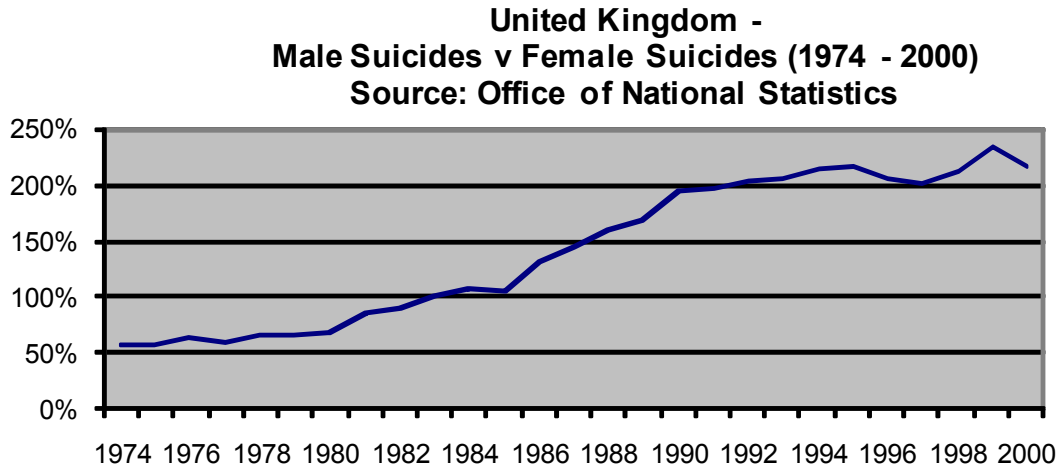
The gender switch, therefore, suggests that "male chauvinist" and "female submissive" behaviour is nothing to do with being a man or woman – it derives from the responsibilities and powers that come with managing people for a living. Through Amy, I came to understand that flirting can be a strategy for responding to disrespectful behaviour, a way of regaining self-respect after feeling slightly humiliated by someone you like, a way to take control rather than a desire to attract. It is easier, of course, if the person you are "answering back" is desirable to you, but I started to see how flirting can also be defensive rather than offensive behaviour (in both senses of the word).

Each can learn from the other and if this story reveals anything, it is the hollowness of some radical feminists who claim men are the enemy, as well as radical masculists who claim that women are feminazis. Both sexes can be hurt – neither has a monopoly on feeling powerless – and each exercises the power at their disposal to regain self-respect after an upset. As Warren Farrell so aptly wrote:

> *There are many ways in which a woman experiences a greater sense of powerlessness than her male counterpart: the fears of pregnancy, aging, rape, date rape, and being physically overpowered; less socialization to take a career that pays enough to support a husband and children; less exposure to team sports and its blend of competitiveness and cooperation that is so helpful to career preparation; greater parental pressure to marry and interrupt career for children without regard to her own wishes; not being part of an 'old boys' network'; having less freedom to walk into a bar without being bothered….*
>
> *Fortunately, almost all industrialized nations have acknowledged these female experiences. Men, though, have a different experience. A man who has seen his marriage become alimony payments, his home become his wife's home, and his children become child-support*

*payments for those who have been turned against him psychologically feels he is spending his life working for people who hate him. When a man tries to keep up with payments by working overtime and is told he is insensitive, or tries to handle the stress by drinking and is told he is a drunkard, he doesn't feel powerful, but powerless. When he hears a cry for help will be met with 'stop whining', or that a plea to be heard will be met with 'yes, buts', he skips past **attempting** suicide and just **commits** suicide.*[4]

At the end of 2005, the Samaritans web-site claimed there were four suicides by men for each suicide by a woman. The Office of National Statistics reports a slightly narrower difference in 2000, but the biggest shock comes from seeing the trend.




The above graph shows how much more men have committed suicide than women *since the introduction of sexual equality legislation.* The Samaritans data indicates that the line has continued to climb upwards to 300% over the last 5 years.

Coming to terms with the double-standards applied to men and women is hard – and deeply emotional. Our assumptions about their differences are so firmly rooted that it sometimes takes a major shock – or series of insights beyond the norm – to come to terms with it.

Some well-known gender researchers have written about the way they confronted their own prejudice. Some openly describe how they realised they were blaming men and women while praising or defending the other sex for

*exactly the same behaviour*. One writer is Nancy Friday. Her books of men's and women's collected fantasies remain popular to this day. For me, however, the most moving part is the introduction to her book on men. She describes how she came to terms with the double-standard when she started to receive men's fantasies and reacted to them with horror. Initially, she regarded them as depraved but as time passed she became self-aware of the reason for her horror. She confesses – in quite poignant terms – that it was simply that the accounts had been written *by men, not women*. When she received similar "depraved" fantasies from women, she wrote back praising and applauding their "liberation" and "sexual emancipation".

When men's and women's fantasies are put side by side, it is hard to tell which are men's and which are women's. This forces people to confront their own double-standard and accept that men love (and desire) women as much as women love (and desire) men. After confronting her own prejudice, Nancy Friday began to think that men love women *more* than women love men.

It is not only women who make this journey. Warren Farrell had a similar tale to tell:

> *Then one day (in one of those rare moments of internal security) I asked myself whether whatever impact I might have had was a positive one; I wondered if the reason so many more women than men listened to me was because I had been listening to women but not listening to men.*
> *I reviewed some of the tapes from amongst the hundreds of women's and men's groups I had started. I heard myself. When women criticized men, I called it "insight", "assertiveness", "women's liberation", "independence", or "high self-esteem." When men criticized women, I called it "sexism", "male chauvinism", "defensiveness", "rationalizing", and "backlash". I did it politely – but the men got the point. Soon the men were no longer expressing their feelings. Then I criticized the men for not expressing their feelings!* [5]

Both Nancy Friday and Warren Farrell went on a journey that few people take. As a result, they started

writing for *both* sexes and began exploring how each loves "the other" while simultaneously drawing attention to the inequities faced by their own sex. Their insights started to reveal the double-standard, and as Warren Farrell went public it had a profound impact on his life:

> *Almost overnight my standing ovations disintegrated. After each speaking engagement, I was no longer receiving three or four new requests to speak. My financial security was drying up. I would not be honest if I denied that this tempted me to return to being a spokesperson only for women's perspectives. I liked writing, speaking and doing television shows. Now it seemed that all three were in jeopardy. I quickly discovered it took far more internal security to speak on behalf of men than to speak on behalf of women. Or, more accurately, to speak on behalf of both sexes rather than on behalf of only women.*[6]

The hostility meted out to women who 'switched sides' was even more extreme. Esther Vilar wrote a book called *The Manipulated Man*:

> *The determination with which those women portrayed us as victims of men not only seemed humiliating but also unrealistic. If someone should want to change the destiny of our sex – a wish I had then as I have today – then that someone should attempt to do so with more honesty. And possibly also with a little humour.*
>
> *People ask me if I would write this book again. Well, I find it right and proper to have done so. But seen from today's perspective, my courage in those days may only be attributable to a lack of imagination. Despite all I wrote, I could not really imagine the power I was up against….As absurd as it sounds, today's men need feminists much more than their wives do.*[7]

Esther Vilar received death threats for exposing the ways that women manipulate men and only her position as an academic prevented her financial security being threatened in same way as Warren Farrell's. Her book is provocative, and certainly my wife Caroline found parts of it offensive. The argument Esther makes, however, is that

any intelligent person – drawing only on what can be observed in life – could make an equally convincing case that women rule and men are life's victims. She makes that case and it is clear from book reviews by readers on Amazon that many men agree with her. I found the book outrageous – at times I sucked my teeth at the boldness of her satire – but I confess that it struck an alarming number of chords and came shockingly close to the "truth" (from a man's perspective). As a consequence of reactions to the book, Esther claims that she has now joined up with "feminists who are talking about men as human beings". And women too, I hope.

Esther Vilar, Nancy Friday and Warren Farrell – these three writers who you may or may not have heard of – have travelled a journey that many others are now travelling, including myself and Poonam Thapa (this book's editor). My own journey started in 1994 when I was elected to lead an investigation into sexual harassment. Let me tell you a bit about that.

## The Double-Standard – A Personal Journey

My views changed after a female colleague, Mary, resigned from our company and accused a work colleague, Brian, of sexual harassment. I was a director of the company and the law obliged us to investigate. My co-investigator - a women called Alison – was also *elected* by colleagues to investigate on the basis that we were in the best position to be fair to both parties. Here is how we reflected on the double-standard in 1994 when investigating this claim.

> *We did believe Brian was a harasser and therefore we did terminate his employment. However, the grounds were very thin as there was only one incident relating to the original accusation that held up under our standard of evidence. Even then, we felt instinctively uncomfortable dismissing him for what we felt was an infatuation with a woman who had as her starting point that 'all men are potential rapists'. Mary seemed to interpret mild behaviour as very threatening and we did feel that she over-reacted to Brian's attention. However, we felt bound by our own*

*rules of evidence and were influenced by the fact that we'd uncovered a pattern of harassment. Mary did feel harassed and that was the issue in law.*

The accusation in this case was not that Brian had touched her, tried to kiss, make a pass or grope her, made obscene comments, sent sexual messages, or anything of this kind. The accusation was that he had waited outside work for Mary because he wanted to walk with her to the station. Mary did not want to walk with him – she had waited inside the office to avoid him. According to her testimony, she saw him waiting outside the office and ignored him. He then "walked past" quickly in a way that frightened her then "hung around" at the station. Mary felt intimidated and rang the office in a distressed state. This call, as reported by her work colleague, corroborated that Mary felt genuinely harassed.

At the time, however, Mary was having a workplace affair with Julian, a founder of the business. He was involved with another woman outside work – a person he had been involved with for most of his adult life. As a result Julian would not commit to Mary and eventually their relationship broke down.

To add to the complexity of the situation, Mary was receiving silent calls at home. She believed the two incidents were connected and that these calls were from Brian. There was no evidence presented to us that they were linked but their occurrence did influence us. With more experience, however, we might have considered whether the calls were coming from Julian's life-long partner (Mary's rival in love). She would have access to Julian's address book and could have obtained Mary's phone number. She had a much stronger motive to harass Mary than Brian.

It is only with greater experience of how rejected or threatened people behave, plus a chance conversation with my wife, Caroline, during which she suggested Mary might have been trying to induce Julian to show commitment, that I later considered this alternative explanation. Had we considered this at the time, Brian might have kept his job.

Either way, this incident resulted in Mary "freaking out". Brian would not co-operate with the investigation and we took the view that this did not help his case. However, just as happened in the case of Amy and Mark, Mary admitted that she had never said directly to Brian that his attention was unwelcome and we felt that it was unreasonable to terminate his contract on this basis.

The investigation was an extraordinary learning experience for those involved and only reports that Brian also harassed *other* people in the workplace (both men and women) finally convinced us that we should recommend terminating his contract. When we reported back our findings to the board of directors, however, we underwent a second learning experience:

> *We tried to raise the issues that we'd uncovered and got nowhere very quickly. My co-investigator left the company shortly afterward - I think her decision was linked to what she learned during the investigation. When the (other) women were uninterested or argumentative about some of our conclusions we felt they were acting as a group from an ideological position. We'd done our job (got rid of Brian) and now we should shut up and not rock the boat, particularly if our views challenged a feminist orthodoxy. I ended up feeling used, particularly by the women in the company, and for the first time saw what a powerful caucus they had created. Later incidents confirmed my view that if there was institutional sexism it was practiced more by the women than by the men.*

After the dispute, I began to take more interest in books that presented different perspectives on gender issues based on men's experiences of women. It took me a decade to complete my own journey but eventually I was forced to fully confront the double-standards as a result of what I witnessed during field work for my doctorate.

## From Personal to Professional

The completion of that journey occurred in 2003 – two years before the conflict with Sarah. A temporary worker

called Phil was disciplined for comments he made about women's attractiveness. I decided to follow this up by talking to Diane, the human resources manager.

I found that Phil had been talking to a female friend who was showing him her tan marks after sunbathing in the garden. In fact, a number of women in the workplace were comparing tan marks and there was sexual banter involving several men and women. In this context, Phil joined the conversation and commented (only to his female friend) that there were a number of attractive women around the workplace.

Phil was married with two children and I worked with him. I found him more helpful and considerate than the majority of his fellow workers. He alone would run errands for me and my colleagues (mostly women) while others (mostly men) told us to get our own stocks from the warehouse when we ran out. He liked to chat about the TV show Big Brother, as fascinated as his female colleagues (and I) at the drama of human relationships.

After overhearing some of Phil's comments, a woman (<u>not</u> his female friend) took offence and reported him to a manager. I was in a meeting with Brenda, the department director, when Diane came to ask for her advice. They discussed sacking him immediately, but Brenda felt the company should "give him a chance to change". Diane talked to Phil. He was so upset that he did not want to come into work again, but Diane persuaded him that this would be unfair to him. He came back the following Monday and gave an unconditional apology to both his line manager and the woman to whom he had caused offence. No action, to my knowledge, was taken against the women who *provoked* his comments, or the other men and women who were engaged in sexual banter.

The incident affected his reputation – he was marked as a "potential threat to women" in the minds of several staff – particularly Brenda and Diane (the same people we 'met' earlier in Chapters 3 and 4, and who disciplined Ben for a drink invitation). I chatted to him over lunch during this period and detected that he felt frustrated at his inability to talk to his immediate work colleagues (nearly all men). They were excluding him from

conversations, and getting irritated with him when he tried to talk about workplace issues. Consequently, Phil had to make most of his conversation with women and became increasingly isolated from the men. Then, when he failed to help after some equipment fell over in the workplace, the men complained that he was "not pulling his weight".

At this time, I was working in the warehouse with a group comprising mainly women. There was a schoolboy working with us – the son of a company manager. He was a good looking lad, personable, intelligent and likeable - the women teased him a lot. Once they chatted and engaged in banter about how they would like to "take him home". The chat was a mixture of motherly and sexual – but it was clear to me that had a group of 25-40 year old *men* chatted about how they would like to take a 16 year old school*girl* home, few people (men or women) would have interpreted their chat as 'fatherly'.

You may remember a news story that a head teacher banned girls from wearing short skirts to school because it created discipline problems.[8] It was around this time that a group of schoolgirls visited Custom Products – some of them wearing short skirts. Phil saw them and made a comment to a young man standing next to him. With two daughters of the same age, Phil felt no inhibitions chatting to the girls as they passed him. The young man standing next to him, however, reported to a manager that he chatted to the girls and had commented on their skirts.

Phil was summarily dismissed. When I followed this up with Diane, she said that "the company just can't take the risk" with the clear implication that Phil may be a paedophile. Phil escalated the matter to Harry, the Managing Director, but Harry backed Diane's recommendation and confirmed the sacking.

The behaviour of the women in the warehouse towards the 16 year old schoolboy resulted in nothing more than laughter. Nobody, even for a fraction of a second, thought that these women may be paedophiles following their comments about a young man's sexuality, and after expressing a desire to "take him home". Phil's behaviour, however, almost got him lynched. When the news broke

in my work area, a red-faced man stormed in claiming Phil had "touched up" the schoolgirls and needed a "thumping". When I checked this with Diane, she said this was completely untrue. Phil had simply talked to the girls and been sacked for commenting on their short skirts.

The learning point here is that *neither the woman who Phil was talking to in the first incident, nor the schoolgirls in the second incident (or the school), made any complaint about his behaviour*. The interventions that triggered both his disciplining and sacking came from third-party interventions by people who constructed his behaviour as "inappropriate", even as they engaged in similar behaviour themselves. In short, it was inappropriate for him to admire, or talk to women or schoolgirls, or make any comment about sexually revealing clothing (even though head teachers and journalists were having an active public debate around this time).

Is it conceivable that a company would sack a woman simply for talking to men, schoolboys, or commenting on their attractiveness or clothing? The evidence from the study is that people in this workplace thought such behaviour from women was 'just a laugh'. That is, of course, what men used to say in their own defence about 30 years ago. In which direction should we go? Should we show greater tolerance towards men, or greater intolerance toward women?

## The Reaction to Raising Concerns

I decided to raise these issues with John, Harry, Brenda and Diane. In Chapter 4 we learnt that Diane gave information to women about Ben (to help them decide whether to pursue a sexual relationship), but would not give information to Ben about the same women. Both Brenda and Diane discouraged Ben from pursuing relationships.

In other contexts, however, their behaviour was different. While Brenda had discouraged John (a male director who had been separated from his wife for over six months) from starting a sexual relationship with a

colleague who worked in a different office, Diane was encouraging a female manager to pursue a relationship with a man (also a male director) with whom she worked *in the same office on a daily basis*. In this case, the man had been separated from his wife for only a few weeks, not months.

So, when men solicited advice – and even when they did not – they were discouraged or denied information. When women asked advice, they were generally encouraged or given information. These inconsistencies, therefore, are consistent. They illustrate how women *collectively* co-operate to control men's sex lives within a community. This is consistent with John Molloy's finding during a 10 year study. He found that men generally make their choices individually while women frequently – but not always – behave collectively in choosing a mate.[9]

When I raised the behaviour of the women in my workgroup with Harry (towards the schoolboy), and asked if I could compare their comments with those made by Phil about the schoolgirls, I was refused access and shortly after received the following email.

> *There can be no denying that our view of the integrity and value of the research has been seriously damaged. I had hoped Friday's meeting would have proved uplifting but, to date, it hasn't. In respect of your proposal to include "revised interpretations" in future work, this is of course a matter for you and your conscience. From our perspective all we would ever have expected is the evidence of rigour and balance in the formulation of assertions relating to our company. Unfortunately this was lacking, hence our disappointment.*

The managers concerned – who had, up to that point, been good friends – seemed incredulous that I should raise (or even notice) these inconsistencies. When it was clear that my interpretations would not radically change, and that I intended to continue looking into the issues, I was excluded from the research site on Harry's instruction. Like Irene before me (see Chapter 4), I was "resigned due to culture mismatch". The only thing that stopped me being incredulous was familiarity with this

phenomenon from my earlier experience of investigating gender conflict.

## The Current State of the Gender Equality Debate

It has become much easier in the last 30 years for women to raise double-standards that affect their working lives. Employers now realise that they run the risk of losing a legal case if they do not act on their complaints. But at present, it is extremely difficult (almost impossible) for men to raise double-standards that affect their own working lives. As the story about Amy and Mark shows, managers are not sympathetic, nor are solicitors beating down the doors of the courts to uphold fairness and justice. This may be because they do not believe men's accounts or think that cases cannot be won.

It is difficult for both men and women to come to terms with the double-standard because it violates much of what we are led to believe through the media, books, stories, films and other forms of culture. It also offends our sense that it is 'natural' for men and women to provide special protections for women in our society. Therefore, raising the double-standard creates emotional turmoil because it violates our sense that society has become more equal since the 1970s.

### Controlling 'People Like Phil'

In late 2005, the sexual discrimination laws were changed to lower the standard of evidence required to establish that harassment and sex discrimination has occurred. The intent of "perpetrators" – people like Phil - no longer has to be taken into account if it can be shown that his behaviour "has the effect of" intimidating or degrading someone at work. But if he feels intimidated or degraded (by a false accusation), nobody appears to take this into account.

Think of Amy and Mark, Sarah and myself, Ben and Hayley, Diane and Ben, Brian and Mary. Could any party credibly claim that the behaviour of the other had degraded or intimidated them more than the other way around? Certainly, Mark – or as we now know, Sarah –

*claimed* she was "distressed", but was this claim *reasonable* in the light of her own behaviour? By changing the standard of proof an employer is encouraged to act even if the cause of a person's distress is emotional immaturity (i.e. the inability to process emotions).

In short, it gives carte blanche to the hurt party to transfer responsibility for their own feelings and forces managers into the role of 'parent' obliging them to start disciplinary proceedings. Further, it regards employees as children in the employer/employee relationship, to be disciplined in the way a schoolteacher might discipline an errant pupil. The parties are not treated as adults attempting to cope with adult dilemmas and responsibilities.

How, then, should managers react? This is a more challenging question than it first appears. At present, if they do not satisfy the accuser and prevent a "hostile environment", then the employee can bring a claim in an industrial tribunal. This puts enormous pressure on the employer to remove the cause of an employee's "distress". It does not, however, give the employer much scope to determine whether the distress is reasonable. Disbelieving the employee – by taking a sceptical view of the cause of their distress – could be interpreted by a court as a failure to take a complaint seriously or prevent a hostile environment. It might even be argued that the investigation contributed to further employee distress, increasing the risks to the employer.

But what of the accused? How are they to be protected from the destruction of their career and reputation by a false or unreasonable allegation? How can we ensure that their voice is heard and given equal credence? How can we apply the 'innocent until proven guilty' standard in the workplace?

One option is to contractually oblige employees (and suppliers or customers) to enter mediation if there is a sexual dispute. This could be a statutory requirement. So far such provisions have been resisted in employment law and company law (but are gaining ground in family law). The view at present in employment law is that parties should decide for themselves whether they enter

mediation. If there is no provision in the contract, then it does not have to occur. In the case of employees, however, anyone employed for more than a year has certain protections against unfair treatment. It is still possible with suppliers and customers, however, to terminate a contract immediately and unilaterally withdraw without explanation if the contract does not make provisions for mediation.

Given that emotions run particularly deep in sexual disputes, let us examine the roots of the double-standard. Why is it that only the bravest (or most foolish!) attempt to confront it.

## The Roots of the Double-Standard

In 1972, Esther Vilar listed eight things that constituted a double-standard for men and women in almost all cultures. Only *one* of these has been addressed by the women's movement.

- Men are far more likely to be conscripted into armies
- Men are far more likely to be forced to fight in wars
- Men retire later than women (even though, due to lower life-expectancy, men could make a case that they should be entitlement to retire earlier)
- Men have far less control over their reproduction (for men, there is neither a pill nor abortion). Men still get the children women want them to have, while women – in industrialised cultures – almost never have children unless they consent.
- Men financially support women; women rarely, or only temporarily, provide similar support to men.
- Men work all their lives; women work only temporarily or not at all. [This is the one aspect of social life that Vilar claims has substantially changed after 25 years of the women's movement.]
- Even though men work all their lives, by the end the average man is poorer that the average woman.[10]

- Men only "borrow" their children; women keep them (as men work all their lives and women do not, men are automatically robbed of their children in cases of separation *with the reasoning that they have to work*).

All of these points are worth debating. Whether true or false, it was not these points that emerged as the underlying *cause* of the double-standard in my own research. While it is a good description of the *symptoms,* the cause is two interlinked sets of expectations. The first concerns the invisible assumption that men will take responsibility for conflict; the second is how these beliefs impact on courtship behaviour.

## Obstacles to Resolving Sexual Conflicts

When arguments are made that women and men are inherently different, this translates into an argument for different expectations based on gender. Many of these expectations are so deeply rooted in our culture that they are invisible to us. Beliefs about violence affect the way sexual conflicts are resolved – including at work. Feminist scholars have repeatedly asserted that men control women through violence or potential violence both at home and at work.

However, data from a major self-esteem study in 1990 by the Association for University Women (AAUW) suggests something quite different. Both boys and girls were aware of the hostility to boys from predominantly female teachers. In early childhood a pattern of discipline develops whereby boys are treated in a harsh and authoritarian manner. This is reinforced in schools – mainly by women – and if the women need discipline enforced, they call on men to do it for them. Both sexes (at an age where they have not yet encountered arguments regarding women's "oppression") perceive that girls are better liked and given more support while boys are punished more harshly and more frequently[11]. This data, however, was *suppressed* by the AAUW until uncovered and published by researchers in the mid-1990s[12].

This pattern of (mainly) women punishing (mainly) males for "disobedience" continues into adulthood. The level of violence against women in personal relationships emerged in studies conducted during the 1970s and 80s. However, many of these studies *only asked women* about violence. Researchers started to question the design of these studies. They asked - as more and more people are now asking - what results will be obtained if we ask both men and women the *same* questions. By early 2005, there had been 174 studies involving *both* men and women[13]; 27 showed violence between men and women to be equal; 25 showed men (in one or more respects to be more violent) while **90** showed women (in one or more respects) to be more violent[14]. Where one sex attacks the other and the other does not fight back, it is women – by a ratio of 3:1 to 7:1 depending on the study – who *initiate* the physical attack. This should not obscure, however, that the bulk of the evidence finds violence is **equitable and reciprocal** (in around two-thirds of cases).

Those who object to the two-gender studies argue that men are stronger and the consequences to women from male violence are more serious.[15] Studies, however, are equivocal on this point. Older studies show greater levels of physical harm to women but these are based on *self*-reports. This introduces bias because a woman punched by a man is more likely to think of this as violence (and a crime) than a man punched by a woman. The lack of concern over women punching men is revealed in media studies and popular culture. In the women's media, and on greeting cards, for example, images of violence against men are considered humorous. Below are some examples:

*Not all men are annoying: some are dead.*
*(Slogan on a badge)*

*Well, finally – a man who gets it!*
*(Caption on a cartoon with a man pointing a gun at his own head)*

*"Mommy, how come men usually die before women?"*
*"Well dear, no one knows, but we think it's a pretty good*

*system."*
*(Poster)*[16]

In contrast, no market or industry exists for greeting cards that depict violence against women for men's amusement.[17]

Later studies into male/female violence were designed differently, and were able to reduce gender bias in assessing the seriousness of injuries by asking the participant what treatment they received. They find that women compensate for men's greater physical strength by using knives or other instruments and that men sustain serious injuries at least as often as women[18]. Two studies in particular, highlight this. Firstly, researchers found that – contrary to expectations - 13% of men and 9% of women were physically injured. Secondly, they found that 1.8% (men) and 1.2% (women) reported injuries needing first aid and that 1.5% (men) and 1.1% (women) needed treatment by a doctor or nurse.

## Are Men 'Naturally' Violent?

The belief that men are *inherently* more violent – without discussion of the social reasons that give rise to violence - results in many false views about men, and many false allegations. A study of war-time behaviour, for example, showed that only 2% of men in the trenches shot to kill – that 98% of men shot to miss! Put a gun in a man's hand, give him total permission to maim and kill without retribution and 49 out of every 50 will turn down the chance *even though they risk a court-martial for cowardice, and death by firing squad, if their behaviour is discovered by their own commanders.*[19] Seen another way, in all male environments (i.e. when there are no women present) face to face male-on-male violence virtually disappears, even when the context is war. Following the study, the training of US armed forces was radically changed and now includes psychological restructuring and black propaganda to encourage greater violence.[20]

The belief that men are inherently violent, therefore, is a media (and evolutionary psychologists) fiction. Reports

are not a reaction to the actual levels of injury to both sexes but the *level of emotion* that attacks on each sex provokes. Collectively, we care more about women's injuries than men's injuries, more about women's feelings than men's feelings. This provides a simple, and highly credible, explanation for why women show their feelings and report their injuries more often than men. There is less incentive to show your feelings when people disbelieve your claims, or attack you for showing your feelings. There is an increased incentive to show feelings if you think your claims will be believed.

The argument (or culturally held belief) that men are the violent sex, therefore, is not only untrue in the context of personal relationships, it can be understood as an outcome of having to enter the competitive world of wealth creation. Success is needed not just to survive personally, but to attract a mate. Why, then, do we insist on believing that men are 'naturally' more violent? Why is the idea propagated that men control women (and other men) through their potential for violence? Is it because there is a hidden consensus that men *should be* responsible for violence?

## Cultural Images of Violence During Courtship

The nature and purpose of male violence in films is particularly enlightening. There are legions of films that celebrate violent men who protect women [21] and who berate violent men who harm women [22]. The film *Gladiator* was a favourite amongst women because the hero (Russell Crowe) was considered "sex on legs" by popular women's magazines. The film, however, consists of him routinely and repeatedly lopping the heads off (and sticking swords into) men in order to get a chance to avenge his wife's death.

Another favourite amongst women was *Cold Mountain*, where a man (Jude Law) – a deserter from the army walking home at the request of his lover during the American civil war - ruthlessly and efficiently kills men in defence of vulnerable women before returning home to impregnate his lover (Nicole Kidman). Male violence, is contemporary entertainment – erotic entertainment even

– *for women*, so long as the violence is directed towards their safety.

How are these modern Hollywood heroes rewarded for their unselfish protection of women at the conclusion of the film? They are *killed* saving the woman they love the most. Russell Crowe lies dying in the gladiatorial arena having avenged both his wife and saved his earthly sweetheart from a corrupt emperor. Jude Law lies dying after arriving home to shoot dead the men who had been sexually pursuing his lover.

Just as in the box-office record setter *Titanic*, the death of the male hero increases the romantic climax of the film. Modern movies still play heavily on heroic men violently saving women, and *in the biggest box-office successes* dying for the woman he loves the most. Male death, in a romantic context, sells. And it sells particularly well to women.

Now here is a challenge for you – one that you can play at dinner parties like the "woman doctor" riddle immortalised in the film *Tin Cup*. Can you think of any movie (or book) that uses the death of a woman who has just saved her male lover to enhance the *romantic* climax of the film?[23] In popular culture, violence by men is presented as part of a romantic fantasy, but only when the purpose is to protect (beautiful) women or family members from other violent men. While this has been articulated as the preservation of "male dominance", it is actually the women who survive and the men who die as a result of this "dominance". In the most "romantic" films, even the male hero dies. So, is it men who are empowered or women? Have we been conned for nearly half a century by a false (or one-sided) argument?

Now that many studies show that men do not use violence or the threat of violence to control women any more than women use it to control men, it is time for a major rethink on the way we view gender conflict. The claim that men *are* responsible for violence masks a political argument (and cultural arrangement) that men *should be* responsible for violence. The root cause is a romantic fantasy. Women want social and economic protection, particularly at the point of giving birth to a child. When it comes to selecting a mate (rather than a

boyfriend) they are attracted to, and regularly select, those men who are appear able to provide it.

## The Impact of Beliefs about Violence

Women who want children are attracted to men that are economically successful and physically strong.[24] This is, of course, an entirely understandable (and reasonable) way of thinking when there is an expectation of vulnerability during and after childbirth. It is also a reasonable way of thinking when considering what is needed to raise a family within a society where violence still occurs.

It is unremarkable – even if difficult for men and women to accept – that the prevalent idea in our society is that men *are* and also *should be* more responsible for conflict. This inclines us – reflexively – to assign responsibility for all conflicts to men (male/male and male/female, sometimes even female/female[25]), even when initiated by women. This bias shows up in academic studies. Over 95% of *false* allegations about violence and sexual abuse are made by women. Men are the target of *false* accusations 96% of the time[26]. What is important here is that the accusations *are believed* – the study examined the outcomes of court cases.

Moreover, accusations or revelations that trigger sympathy can be part of *courtship* to induce a potential lover to show their feelings and start to protect. Watchers of the popular TV series 24 will remember the way that Jack Bauer's daughter, Kim, pretended that her father was dead to induce Rick to feel sympathy for her. Rick responded by putting his arm around her – a "result" from Kim's perspective.

Later, Kim goads Rick by taunting him with the question "do you always do what *he* tells you to do?" to get Rick to defend her (and her girlfriend) against a threatening man. Rick not only responds, but actually starts to "have feelings" for Kim, rather than recognize that she is manipulating him. Kim, in turn, starts to "have feelings" for Rick when he protects her. Much of the storyline is rooted in the sexual tension created by his

desire to protect her, and her desire to be protected by him.

Conflicts at work are underpinned by a similar dynamic – a woman decides to switch allegiance and give her attention, and support, to a person better placed to handle her conflicts (i.e. reduce her emotional distress). As in the case involving Harry, Brenda and Diane (Chapter 4), handling such conflicts on a woman's behalf can win a man approval – something that may potentially lead to a sexual encounter or closer friendship (or, at least, avoid being criticised as a "loser", "wuss", "wimp" or "weakling"). Both parties, therefore, have an emotional reason for the "stronger" party to handle the "weaker" party's conflicts – if they want a close relationship.

The result is a social dynamic that works *against some men* and *in favour of some women* but also creates the glass-ceiling culture. Women cannot indefinitely escalate conflicts to men. Men and women, on the other hand, who have reached top positions by handling others conflicts are unlikely to welcome into their midst anyone whose conflicts they have had to handle regularly. Thus is created a complex web of male/female behaviour that *both creates and resolves gender (sexual) conflicts* to the advantage of some pairs of men and women at the expense of others.

It is this interlinked relationship between beliefs about violence and courtship that creates a second obstacle to equitable outcomes in gender conflicts. Let us now see how some women's propensity for testing out a man's conflict handling skills ends up encouraging behaviours that *some* women welcome as courtship but *other* women label 'harassment'.

## The "Problem" of Courtship

As I have demonstrated, the most productive relationships are equitable and reciprocal. However, not all people seek this - either for work or romantic purposes. The purpose behind courtship – as with other relationship building processes - is to check out and establish the *inequities* (or symmetries if you prefer) that

both parties *desire*. In Chapter 3, I examined the additional conditions that women apply before they will be drawn into a sexual relationship with a man. Assuming there is sexual attraction and a desire for children, these additional criteria answer an additional question: "will this man provide for and protect me?" For men, recent research has shown that they too have a range of criteria beyond sexual attractiveness and the desire for children: it can be captured by the question "will this woman make me a better person and help my career?"[27]

For men, it might be assumed that they would prefer to find a life partner who does not make them jump through hoops before committing to a sexual relationship, but this – generally speaking - is not the case. A 10-year study has established that many men *prefer* women they have to pursue. Why? Because if a woman puts up barriers to his advances, she is more likely to resist the advances of other men. If he can overcome her resistance then he will have found a partner more likely to be faithful. To a man that wants children, this is important (he will be as sure as possible that the children she bears are his). A woman, however, does not have to do this – she knows that any children she has are her own without checking out if a man will resist other women's advances.

So, the rituals of courtship – for a man who cares about the fidelity of his partner, and women who care about the capacity of their partner to provide and protect – are rooted in behaviours that involve *repeated* attempts by the man to overcome the resistance of the woman. This behaviour is *not about dominance* – it is about both parties establishing compatible and complimentary values for raising children.

My interpretation is that women who want to stay at home with children are more likely to want caring and protective partners. Women who want to have careers – or to have independence within their marriage - are less likely to want caring and protective partners. Men who want a committed relationship with children are more likely to seek a partner who resists their advances. But, men who have no strong feelings about a long-term relationship – or want independence within their

marriage - are less likely to seek a partner who resists their advances.

## Impacts on Gender Conflict

As we noted earlier, the principal female fantasy in romance novels is a man at work who overcomes her resistance. It is not difficult, now, to see why this is the case. For women with a Bridget Jones fantasy - to marry a "real man", have a child, and split their time between home and work – the ideal man is one who will show commitment through *repeated* pursuit of her. Secondly, as Mark Darcy is willing to do, he will also fight rivals (including those who hurt her feelings) and save her when she gets into trouble.

Where this cultural arrangement breaks down, however, is when a person not seeking commitment meets a person who is (or as is increasingly the case, a man or woman meets a person more interested in their career than commitment). As soon as it is realised by the party seeking commitment that the other party is only interested in sex or friendship, then flirting is reconstructed as deceit rather than goodwill *even if the intention is the honest communication of warm feelings*. In these circumstances, anger and bitterness fuels accusations of "inappropriate" behaviour as one party comes to see the other as a perpetrator of emotional fraud (behaving in a 'seductive' way without the intention of a *committed* relationship).

Recent research suggests that the majority of sexual *accusations* (against men) take place after rejection occurs in a relationship that was freely entered into[28]. Many of these occur because the man resists a woman's attempts to coerce him into accepting her sexual values and attitudes. In short, she tries to socialise (i.e. 'harass') him into buying her things, 'give' her children, propose marriage to her, promise exclusivity and risk his own life to protect her. If he resists, she gets angry. To end the double-standard, we need to accept all forms - not just male forms - of harassment and reconstruct them as attempts to socialise "the other". We then need a fresh

debate about forms of socialisation (if any) that should be considered crimes worthy of punishment.

Currently, managers (and the courts) have to presume equality. They can no longer make allowance for the norms of courtship, the various patterns of non-verbal and verbal communication, or the disproportionate number of false sexual accusations against men. The law is only equal on paper. To become equal in practice will require managers, solicitors and judges who will grapple with the issues set out in this chapter, and find the moral courage to face down public outrage when *both sexes* clamour for women to be granted more protection than men, or for men to take more responsibility than women.

There is also a strong argument to reintroduce consideration of intent (i.e. reversing the recent changes in sexual harassment law that allows an employer or court to ignore intent). Current life-goals (the desire for a partner) as well as specific intent towards "the other" both matter. The former radically changes the way a person inter-relates with people of the other sex. The latter informs the specific context of the accusation.

## The Level of Truthful Allegations

What about the level of truthful accusations? A series of careful studies into false accusations – repeated three times because of scepticism over the findings – found that only 40% of rape allegations by women against men are true. Dr Macgregor's studies remain unique because his team of three researchers investigated women's reasons for making false allegations.[29] The initial study was undertaken when 26% of women in the Air Force admitted lying just before taking a lie-detector test. By talking to these women, Dr McDowell established 35 criteria that they had in common.

Using these criteria – three judges re-examined the remaining cases. If *all three independently agreed* the accusation was false, it was recorded as a false accusation. If one of the three felt the allegation was true, it was recorded (for the purposes of the research) as true, even if the other two felt the allegation was false. After bringing

their results together, the study concluded that only 40% of the accusations were true.

Sceptical that these results may simply reflect the culture in the Air Force, the study was repeated in two police forces with civilian case files – the finding of 60% false accusations held. In both cases, however, city authorities refused permission to publish for fear of political repercussions. Overwhelmingly, the reason for a false allegation was to provide a *plausible explanation for distress* when unable to continue, hide or pursue a relationship that was originally *desired*.

## How Can Managers Respond?

What complicates responses to gender-conflict is not only the male/female dynamic between the accuser and the accused, but the male/female dynamic between the accuser and her (or his) line manager and social network. There can be a hidden (and unstated) incentive to use the opportunity of conflict to strengthen other relationships. This impacts on conflict resolution processes. Is there a gender bias amongst line managers, especially male, expressed through support for women's arguments in sexual conflicts? Are men undermining their own for the sake of consensus and acquired beliefs about their own sex? Are they taking advantage of increasingly rare opportunities to win women's approval?

The ideal role of a manager, but a more difficult one, is to provide emotional support to both parties without taking sides. This can put the manager in a difficult position, but it provides a focus for the management training of the future to enable equal opportunity and sexual equality to take root. There is a strong case for mediation in cases that arose strong emotions, and if there is to be discipline and punishment, apply it to the party that will not listen to the other. Reward engagement and dialogue, not withdrawal and accusation. Remember also that openness will not happen automatically – it only happens in an environment where a person believes that the information volunteered will not be used against them. It takes time to build such trust

– more time than managers may wish to give. Instead of paying for legal advice, why not pay for a mediator.

## Summary

In this chapter, I have examined the complexity of sexual conflict and the depth of prejudices that surface during disputes. In unravelling the difficulties there are a number of no-win scenarios that can be turned to win-win scenarios by changing the way gender conflicts are understood and managed. To make this change, however, requires an understanding of both the cultural pressures that induce men to become women's heroes, and how women seek them out at times of crisis. We can experience the depth of these cultural values by watching award winning films that are box-office hits (even notionally 'feminist' films like Cold Mountain). In doing so, the patterns of courtship – and their irreconcilability with current assumptions in sexual harassment laws – are exposed.

Zero-tolerance approaches create communities in which anyone (but normally men) willing and capable of handling conflict will be promoted more rapidly. This can contribute to the glass-ceiling. Others, less willing to handle conflict, or who are blamed for conflict, are demoted or excluded. As a result, those who wish to promote gender equality need to consider a radically different management approach:

- Abandon all use of disciplinary and grievance proceedings for non-violent sexual conflicts in favour of compulsory mediation.
- Make sure all parties understand that blame and punishment is not the goal of the mediation – the goal is mutual understanding.
- Integrate mediation into trading contracts and contracts of employment.
- Support parties trying to express their emotions (so long as the emotions expressed contribute to learning).

- Do not expect or demand "the truth" - truth telling will increase as trust increases (and will stop if trust is decreasing).

- Remember that most people will struggle to express any sexual feelings openly.

Let us finish on a positive note. Overcoming a conflict, particularly a sexual conflict, increases intimacy between people and *strengthens* their relationship substantially.[30] Men and women who understand and accept their sexual feelings for each other have particularly satisfying relationships (even when not married or in a sexual relationship). In the final chapter, I consider the way that intimacy impacts on people at work by considering the stories of participants in a recent international study. I consider its recommendations regarding management training. Lastly, I outline why professionals and managers need to take greater interest in intimacy – they are more likely to be pursued for relationships…

## Notes on Chapter 6

1 See Kakabadse, A., Kakabadse, N. (2004) *Intimacy: International Survey of the Sex Lives of People at Work,* Palgrave. Ironically, this study reveals how relationships in organisations dependant on public appearances (such as solicitors practices) are conducted covertly. The incidence levels are not necessarily lower, but the manner in which they are conducted leads to many humorous anecdotes as well as bitterness on the part of people who would prefer to have their relationships acknowledged.

2 This is a study yet to be undertaken, but something I hope to research at some point. In Chapter 7, I briefly review a recent case in which a woman was able to secure representation based only on a *verbal* account of her experiences at a party.

3 For legal reasons "Sarah", and all the true identities remain pseudonyms. The true identity of the parties is less important for discussion than their gender, and the way managers responded and intervened on their behalf. I give people names to make it easier to refer to them in subsequent discussion.

4 Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power,* London, Fourth Estate, p. 13.

5 ibid, p. 2.

6 ibid, p. 2.

7 Vilar, E. (1998) *The Manipulated Man,* pp. 7-11.

8 BBC News (2004) *Mini-Skirt Row Spark School Ban,* 20th June 2004. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3823551.stm for full details.

9 Molloy, J. (2003) *Why Men Marry Some Women and Not Others,* Element. See also Allan, E. (2004) "Analyzing the Obvious: Hazing and Gender" in H. Nuwer (ed), *The Hazing Reader,* Indiana University Press. Allan reports that women collectively organise sex games for leading or powerful men in order to maintain their own attractiveness to such men.

10 See Farrell, W. (1994) *The Myth of Male Power,* London, Fourth Estate, p. 32, 33, 34, 48, 56-57, 117, 128-130. Based on census data, Farrell concluded that women as head of households had 141% the

income of men. Also, within the top 1.6% of the population, women's average income is higher than men's.

[11] See AAUW/Greeberg-Lake (1990) *Full Data report*: *Expectations and Aspirations: Gender Roles and Self-Esteem*, American Association of University Women, p. 18. Over 90% of both boys and girls reported that boys are punished more frequently.

[12] See Hoff-Sommers, C. (1995) *Who Stole Feminism? How women have betrayed women*, Simon & Schuster and Hoff-Sommers, C. (2000) *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism is Harming Our Young Men*, Touchstone.

[13] See Fiebert, M. (2005) *References Examining Assaults by Women on their Spouses or Male Partners: An Annotated Bibliography*, California State University.

[14] Figures from studies reporting only men or only women have been excluded.

[15] For an overview of counter-arguments see Kimmel, M. (2001) *Male victims of domestic violence: A substantive and methodological research review,* report to the Equality Committee of the Department of Education and Science, 2001. Kimmel attacks the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) used in two-gender studies as biased. However, the CTS is rigourous in *eliminating* bias from studies into violence by ensuring that both sexes are asked the same questions and use a 10-point scale to assess levels of violence. It has been modified following early criticism and findings on levels of violence have not changed (see Fiebert, 2005).

[16] Examples from Farrell, W. (2000) *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say*, Tarcher/Putnam, Chapter 7.

[17] ibid, Chapter 7. This chapter reviews the media and greeting card industry to show how there is a large market for images of women hurting men, or men being hurt. The reverse does not hold – there are no adverts or greeting cards to amuse men with images of women being physically hurt.

[18] See Capaldi, D. M., Owen, L. D. (2001). "Physical aggression in a community sample of at-risk young couples: Gender comparisons for high frequency, injury, and fear." *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(3): 425-440. Headley, B. D., Scott and D. de Vaus. (1999) "Domestic Violence in Australia: Are Men and Women Equally Violent", *Australian Social Monitor*, 2(3), July.

[19] Ashworth, A. E. (1968) "The sociology of trench warfare, 1914-1918", *The British Journal of Sociology,* 1968, pp. 407-423.

[20] Kovic, R. (2005) *Born on the Fourth of July,* Akashic Books. The book, unlike the film of the same name, provides a vivid depiction of the training that soldiers go through, including the psychological barrage to which they are subjected.

[21] Gladiator, Cold Mountain, LA Confidential are all Oscar winning films from recent years based on this underlying premise.

[22] Silence of the Lambs and Unforgiven are contemporary Oscar winning examples.

[23] My examination is not exhaustive or robust – I did, however, challenge myself by reviewing the last 20 years of Oscar nominated films. None use the death of a woman saving a man as a romantic climax.

[24] Buss, D. (1994) *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating,* New York: Basic Books.

[25] As might be the case, for example, of two women in conflict over a "cheating" man.

[26] Wakefield, H., Underwager, R. (1990) "Personality Characteristics of Parents Making False Accusations of Sexual Abuse in Custody Disputes", *Issues in Child Abuse Accusations,* 2: 121-136.

[27] See Molloy, J. (2003) *Why Men Marry Some Women but Not Others,* Element, pp. 38-40.

[28] Kakabadse, A., Kakabadse, N. (2004) *Intimacy: International Survey of the Sex Lives of People at Work,* Palgrave.

[29] McDowell, P. (1985) "False Allegations", *Forensic Science Digest,* 11(4), p. 64. The digest is not available publicly because it is a publication of the US Air Force Office of Special Investigations. Its findings are discussed, however, in several other books. See also Webb, C. Chapian, M. (1985) *Forgive Me,* Appendix B. Cathleen Webb paid a special tribute to Dr McDowell's investigative insights in her own book about making a false allegation.

[30] See De Drue, C., Weingart, L. (2003) "Task versus relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78(889-905). Also, Tjosvold, D. (1998) "The cooperative and competitive goal approach

to conflict: Accomplishments and challenges", *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 47: 285-342 and the most recent corroboration in Tjosvold, D., Poon, M. and Yu, Z. (2005) "Team effectiveness in China: Cooperative conflict for relationship building", *Human Relations,* 58(3): 341-366.

# Chapter 7 – Copies Strategies

## An Introduction

Some years ago, Caroline and I survived a period during which we both deeply hurt each others' feelings. I discovered something in the course of reconciling with her. Firstly, I could face any situation at work if I felt secure and happy at home. Secondly, I could face any situation at home when secure and happy at work. No matter where we find our security and happiness, it provides a place from which to develop life afresh, to recover and heal our wounds and reduce our desire to punish others. Amongst the many things we found to help was a reading that we chose for our wedding ceremony. Although these words were directed to married couples, they have something to teach us about the nature of relationships – including those in the workplace:

*Escape from Loneliness*

*Love is something far more than desire for sexual fulfilment; it the principal means of escape from the loneliness which afflicts most men and women throughout the greater part of their lives. There is a deep-seated fear, in most people, of the cold world and the possible cruelty of the herd; there is a longing for affection, which is often concealed by roughness, scolding or a bullying manner. Passionate mutual love puts an end to this feeling; it breaks down the hard walls of the ego, producing a new being.*

*Nature did not construct human beings to stand alone and civilised people cannot fully satisfy their sexual instinct without love. The instinct is not completely satisfied unless our whole being, mental quite as much as physical, enters into the relationship. Those who have never known deep*

*intimacy and intense companionship have missed the best thing that life has to give; unconsciously, if not consciously, they feel this, and the resulting disappointment inclines them towards envy, oppression and cruelty. To give due place to love should be therefore a matter which concerns us all, since, if we miss this experience, we cannot attain our full stature, and cannot feel towards the rest of the world that kind of generous warmth without which society would be much poorer.*

*Adapted from 'Marriage and Morals" by Bertrand Russell.*

In this chapter, I want to suggest to you that the best strategy for handling relationship problems at work is to create an organisation structure where people have the space to talk about their relationships. This may mean providing support for informal groups as well as formal ones, and providing support – while resisting intervention - when people are in distress. In arriving at this view, I will explore the findings of a recent international study of intimacy, including the authors' recommendations to managers on handling conflict.

There are two arguments that will evolve in the first half of this chapter. Firstly, a positive attitude to intimacy at work is the mark of an emotionally mature – and economically insightful - leader. Intimacy helps people learn relationship skills, and management – more than any other occupation – is about forging, managing, developing and ending relationships. This does not necessarily mean that managers should encourage intimate workplace relationships, but it does suggest that whenever a person is struggling in one – whether inside or outside the workplace – it is in the interests of all for the leader to support them in their struggle to work out a solution, rather than intervene on their behalf. The way such moments of a person's life are handled leaves an indelible mark on the way they approach situations in the future.

Secondly, leaders (whether formally 'appointed' or not) are more likely to find themselves the subject of others' relationship aspirations. People flock to them, seek things from them more often than others, and this can

make it harder to navigate the ambiguity inherent in receiving a lot of attention. As working closely with people is the single biggest factor in the development of intimacy, and leaders have more relationships than others, their own emotions – on several levels – are more at risk. This provides an added incentive for those with career aspirations to equip themselves for the task.

In the second half of this chapter, I turn my attention to strategies for handling conflict. I draw out the rationale and argument for mediation – both informally, and as part of the legal documents that govern the organisation's relationships with employees, suppliers and customers. I consider the ideological implications of a changed approach for the simple reason that our approach to handling conflict is often rooted in the ideology that we apply to life. By changing the way we view a "problem", we change the way that we deal with it. One of the strategies I offer is to view problems in a different way in order to maximise the chance of a win-win-win outcome (win for each party plus the organisation to which they belong).

As part of this journey, let us first review how intimacy impacts on people in the workplace.

## The Impacts of Intimacy at Work

One of the surprises in the background reading for this book was the discovery that four times as many people report beneficial outcomes from intimate relationships *at work* than the opposite.[1] Secondly, the desire for intimacy is increasing and cannot be inhibited by management action. These are the conclusions of an international survey published in 2004. **In that survey only 2% of respondents believed that policy-guided approaches to managing intimate relationships actually work. A far greater number felt that policy-based interventions made the situation worse rather than better.**

The reports of those who experience intimacy make fascinating reading and women's accounts provide some balance for the predominantly male accounts in earlier

chapters. Names are not given in the original study, but I give people fictional names to make it easier to read. Let us start with Sheila:

> *I grew and changed as an individual through this experience. I have learned a lot of things about myself, about the true nature of love. I have also learned to be more sympathetic and less judgemental of other people (and of myself) when they are facing difficult situations. Has it enhanced my life? Undoubtedly! Was it traumatic? Desperately! Would I take it back? No, not a moment of it!*[2]

Handling intimacy, and the emotions aroused, is not stress free. Even though the above relationship led to marriage, Sheila's work colleagues reacted badly and both she and her husband had to leave the company. However, even when relationships did not result in marriage, women still report predominantly positive experiences. Indeed, *both* parties to intimate relationships report positive attitudes more often than negative attitudes, even when the relationships broke up or were short lived. The account below was given by Jenny:

> *Stan was a 'hunk', an attractive guy who was fully aware of his physical attractiveness to the other sex. At the same time, he was highly intelligent and able to 'play' with ideas and inspire interesting thoughts in everyone around him, including me. I remember in particular his statement, which I pondered for years, "there is nothing more logical than emotion and nothing more emotional than logic." At the time, the mere fact that one could sit and debate the meaning of concepts such as 'love', 'logic' and 'emotion' was a revelation to me. It was so refreshing...I simply basked in the freedom that Stan exuded and enjoyed every minute of being around him.*
>
> *He was a free spirit and was not interested in me being tied to him. I was not interested in having him tied to me either…he was not the type to get attached emotionally to anyone. Even though the relationship did not result in a marriage or even a long term friendship, I cannot say that it*

*resulted in a trauma or big disappointment…He came into my life at a time that I was ready to be liberated and changed it forever. He inspired me to pursue my dreams. How could I be angry at him for that?* [3]

In these two accounts – whether the relationships survived or not – intimacy transformed the women's lives. They learnt a great deal about themselves, how to handle emotions, about tolerance, and the give and take of close relationships. For those, however, that hid the strength of their feelings, the outcomes were more mixed. Let us look at two more stories where women did not express their feelings to the men they desired.

Belinda was a mature student who fell in love with her research supervisor, William. She changed courses to avoid "complications" when William did not respond. Belinda says that she tried all sorts of non-verbal ways of interesting her supervisor but stopped after he started another relationship. Despite this, William continued to take an interest in her work and helped her whenever he could. After her studies she wrote a letter and told him that she loved him and he replied that he had no idea she had felt like this but that their relationship "was like an island out of time and space". She regarded it as "one of the most beautiful letters that I have ever received".

As a result, they continued corresponding even though both had married other people. They had a life-long friendship until William died. When William's marriage broke down, he emailed Belinda to say he was single again and she wrote back quickly to invite him to stay. Disappointingly, however, Belinda received no reply. Later she learnt that William had died on the very same day, living in his work office, searching for a new place to live after being asked to leave home by his wife.

In reflecting on this, Belinda commented that:

*I learnt that **not** doing is worse than doing. I simply couldn't forgive myself for not even trying to initiate a relationship with him. When I found myself in similar situations later in my life, I did take the initiative and learnt to live with the consequences. The most important learning from this relationship was that I was more than just a*

*brain. This man taught me that I had feelings…thanks to him I managed to emerge out of the intellectual cocoon that I created around myself….*[4]

Even though the relationship was not consummated, it had a lifelong impact on their personal and working lives. As with Jenny, the sense of gratitude is palpable – Belinda believed that she benefited from the relationship for the rest of her life.

## Carol and Richard

The third story illustrates the economic impact from being unable to express feelings. Carol, a project administrator contacted Richard, a senior manager to begin discussions on a multi-million pound project. Richard was known as a cranky, private and difficult man but Carol found that once there was mutual sexual interest, they started to get along well:

*…most people who had already worked with him were baffled as to how well we working together and how I seemed to have been able to move him along in accepting some of the parameters that other stakeholders were insisting be part of the proposed collaboration. My ability to keep him 'on side' and keep the project moving forward had earned me a great deal of recognition within the organisation.*[5]

Carol reports that she started to fall in love with Richard – simply on the basis of their email correspondence and when they had a chance to meet they hit it off well.

*Within a few minutes we were sharing a laugh…his two closest colleagues – both women – had worked with him for more than ten years and did not enjoy this easy rapport with him. I found myself thinking about the possibility of an affair with him. Did I want this? Yes, I did, but I also recognised what was at risk for me both personally and professionally.*

They socialised and continued to work together, but over time her feelings started to change:

*I sensed that there was something amiss but I couldn't put my finger on it. In retrospect, I think that deep down I was beginning to recognise that the fantasy of a special relationship with this man was just that – a fantasy that would not be sustained.*

With her change of attitude, the relationship quickly deteriorated and Richard stopped returning her calls. Eventually she told the other stakeholders in the project that she could not work with him any longer and recommended they stop funding the project. In her reflections she says:

*…as difficult as it was, I did learn that I could do what was necessary when I had to – that I could maintain my professionalism. I also learned to trust my inner voice…my trust meter is much more sensitive today.*[6]

The story is illustrative for two reasons: firstly, it shows how powerful a force love can be in motivating people to work together efficiently. The exhilaration that sprang from the opportunities for intimacy made an 'impossible' project possible, simply because Carol and Richard were so motivated to work together. Later, however, when neither could find a way to say out loud what they were privately feeling, the relationship starts to deteriorate. It is likely – although Carol does not express it in these terms – that Richard felt rejected. Carol interprets Richard's change of behaviour as "unprofessional" while her own – closing down the project – is presented as a "professional" course of action.

Was recommending the termination of a multi-million pound project a reasonable and professional course of action? Or would Carol have shown greater professionalism by expressing her feelings to Richard? Would it have been more professional to admit the impact of her feelings to her work colleagues? Maybe this way, the project could have continued.

## Tackling the Intimacy "Problem"

While we could take the view that the kinds of problems reported above are *created* by intimacy at work, an

alternative point of view is that intimacy itself is not the problem – the inability of the parties to deal with intimacy is the problem. **Problems arise when people are unable to express their true feelings inside (or about) a relationship that is becoming, or has become, intimate.**

As the above stories illustrate, the ability and inability to express feelings has personal and organisational consequences that are far reaching. Few people who expressed their feelings regretted doing so – the regrets come predominantly from those who did not express their feelings. A few, like Carol, came to think that putting work before personal relationships was an expression of "professionalism", but we should not lose sight of the way her intimate relationship with Richard gave her career a massive boost when it "earned [Carol] a great deal of recognition".

In the Kakabadses' study, those who conquered their fears found that enduring friendship was the *most frequent* outcome (40% of cases). For some, the outcome was bitterness and disappointment (10% of cases). The impact of jealousy or bitterness from relationship breakdown – as was found at Custom Products and elsewhere – is of such a magnitude that there is still an incentive to find better ways to handle relationship breakdowns. With this in mind, let us consider the views of Ann, one woman who had difficulty coping with sexual advances, however innocent:

> *As a social and fairly extroverted person I have, on occasion, been propositioned by men at work with whom I have enjoyed what I consider to be a good platonic relationship. Looking back, if I had been able to anticipate their advances I would probably have been able to deal with them better. Instead, I have found myself employing avoidance tactics, feeling very guilty and even, on one occasion, bizarrely dating a man simply because, as a friend, I couldn't bring myself to let him down. Certainly, in terms of work relationships, post my realisation of their feeling, I have found it very difficult and embarrassing to*

*deal with these individuals which may certainly have affected my productivity.*[7]

Ann was unable to process her own or other people's emotions. Her admission that she finds it "very difficult and embarrassing to deal with these individuals" belies that she is embarrassed by sexual feelings. When propositioned, Ann regarded her work colleagues as "overstepping the mark" rather than exploring or engaging in reasonable sexual behaviour. Ann was not alone in believing that people should not have intimate relationships at work – some men held these views as well.

Imagine that a colleague came to you in this case. What advice would you give regarding the "appropriateness" of the men's behaviour? Do you believe that Ann is correct in characterising her male colleagues' behaviour as "inappropriate"? Or do you consider that her colleagues' behaviour is reasonable in the circumstances.

In my view, it is not helpful *to Ann* to regard her colleague's behaviour as "inappropriate" unless they continue their pursuit *after* Ann has communicated her disinterest. Even then, it is helpful to both Ann and the men interested in her to understand how a misunderstanding occurred in the first place. The most constructive approach, therefore, is to support Ann so that she can express to her male colleagues what her wishes are, and help her understand why she is attractive to them. One sentence in her account stands out:

*…if I had been able to anticipate their advances I would probably have been able to deal with them better…*

Why was she not able to anticipate them? Knowledge of body language alerts people to others' interest quickly. There are a wide range of behaviours – particularly eye contact, body alignment, patterns and frequency of communication, touch and copying behaviour - that can quickly alert an observant person to others' interest. There are also signalling behaviours that are commonly interpreted – even if not intended – as a desire for sexual

attention. By helping Ann understand what is attractive in her behaviour, and the various ways she is communicating her desire for attention, she will come to understand why her male colleagues are asking her out.

As an employer, the best way to protect Ann is to help her learn about her own attractiveness and the signals she gives off that others interpret as a need for attention. That way, she can take control of what she is 'saying' to others. The men will also feel respected if they are not blamed for responding to behaviours that are attractive.

In some organisations, the culture of 'no relationships' is so strong that employees cannot admit to having a relationship. The farcical outcome in one solicitor's practice is described by Pauline and Jeremy:

*Pauline: It's crazy. There must be about five or six other couples, all like us, trying to hide their affair. The reason the management do not know is that everybody here is very professional. They do their job as required and more! As if we have a social life! We both work over 60 hours.*

*Jeremy: What is irritating and wastes time is what we have to do to conceal our relationship, pretend we are distant from each other, not speak to each other at work; be careful where we are seen socially outside of work. That is irritating; to think that management here figuratively follow you when the work is done. And all of this deceit for what? People have relationships at work. Here, in particular, nobody knows. In other places nobody could care less. The only ones affected are us. As soon as I can leave, I will. What a waste.*[8]

Given that management interventions cannot stop intimacy at work, any workplace that implements 'no relationship' policies has to contend with two things: the impact of clandestine relationships; the loss of staff (together with the investment in their recruitment, training and induction). The relationships – as the above extract illustrates – will continue.

## The Hypocrisy of "Professionalism"

"Professionalism" is a cover, a charade that hides the social reality of sexual desire and intimacy. As Jeremy points out – it is wasteful. It means that he and Jenny cannot have a 'normal' relationship even outside work. As a result, the organisation will lose two hardworking employees. This raises costs, reduces profits, simply to maintain an image of "professionalism". How professional is an organisation that leaves its staff no option except to resort to deceit and intrigue in order to lead a normal life?

If we recall the conflicts earlier in the book, the claim of "unprofessionalism" is recurrent. Brenda felt it was unprofessional for Ben to flirt with Hayley, or for John to consider a relationship with a sales representative. Mark accused Amy of unprofessionalism for talking about the nature of friendship between men and women. Simon considered Andy's relationship with Gayle unprofessional.

In all these cases, others behaviour caused distress to the accuser. But why? Logically, it can only cause distress if the alleged targets of affection (i.e. those not receiving affection) are thinking about the prospect of intimacy, or are jealous of the intimacy enjoyed by others. Secondly, most examples show women unable to understand the intent of men, and unwilling to ask questions in order to clarify it. In some cases there was sexual interest, but in other cases it was projected onto the men by other women/men. In some cases the accusations were clearly rooted in jealousy, and all are characterised by hypocrisy. In most cases, accusers are trying to hide (from themselves or others) the meaning and consequences of *their own* thoughts and conduct.

While we can have sympathy for those people who felt unsettled and intimidated by others (or their relationship aspirations), was it reasonable to make accusations without establishing the reason for, and nature of, their interest? In earlier chapters, we established that women are as interested in relationships (and sex) as men, and privately fantasise about this. While the prevailing view is that women are particularly good at intimacy and

relationships, the above cases do not support this contention. Let us consider for a moment why this may be the case.

## Secrecy and Power

The pattern in both the Kakabadse's study, and the cases described in this book, is that both sexes, but women more than men, are reluctant to express their feelings *to the people they are attracted to.* Women are more willing than men, however, to discuss their relationships with third parties.[9] Moreover, when either receives attention from others' and wish to hide their own feelings, they react either passively or aggressively. As a result of the norms in most societies, this means women getting angry at (or frightened of) men more often than the other way around.[10]

These accord with the findings of a survey of over 2,000 women in which 60% of those attracted to a male work colleague said they would not reveal their feelings to anyone – even their best friend. Men who pick up on a woman's feelings, and make a sexual advance, may find – in 60% of cases – that they will be faced with flat denial that the woman was interested. If you remember, a 60% figure was also established by Dr McDowell with regard to false claims. In the Kakabadse's study, the "majority" (i.e. nearly 60%) of harassment claims were regarded as unjustified. The 60% figure, perhaps, should be put to the test in further studies.

It is, therefore, little wonder that men are often confused over their own behaviour towards women. It may be that in around 60% of cases, they assessed the situation correctly only to be told that they did not. Women's reluctance to express, or admit, their feelings is a hidden and potentially problematic management issue when intimacy erupts into conflict. The conflict may be *created* by the emotional defences of those hiding their feelings (not the behaviour that took place).

We also need data on the extent to which men hide their feelings (or are able to keep them hidden) in the same contexts. As women's behaviours are largely non-verbal, they are more deniable, and this makes men more

vulnerable to accusations. Until such time as people can discuss body language and non-verbal communication as similar to verbal communication, confusion and misdirection will reign (for this reason, I include Appendix A – a summary of research into body language).

Some of the stories illustrate that "sexual advances" do not indicate a strong wish for a sexual relationship. This was evident in Andy's comments regarding Gayle, Ben's attitude to Hayley, and Amy's comments to Mark. In the Kakabadse's study, 21% of respondents reported "intimate" relationships that were non-physical (compared to 39% which were physical and 40% who reported no intimate relationships at all). The primary problem during relationship development – as we saw vividly throughout earlier chapters - is how each party establishes the intent of the other. One psychologist couched the problem as follows:

> *There is no such thing as a non-sexual relationship between men and women, only sexual relationships in which both parties agree not to have sex.*[11]

And this is the crux of the problem – how do women and men agree **not** to have (or have) sex when they like each other?[12] The answer, ironically, is one of two ways: firstly, by developing an intimate relationship that allows the parties to discuss their feelings; secondly, through non-invasive flirting that enables each party to gauge the interest of the other. Both these behaviours, of course, can be considered harassment if one or other party (mostly women) claim they are offended by the other. In short, the way that men and women decide **not** to have sex is against the law whenever one or other party decides to be offended after feeling snubbed. It is no wonder, therefore, that handling such issues at work are becoming more emotive and difficult to manage.

## Harassment

The Kakabadse's study concluded the following with regard to harassment:

> *Some of the harassment incidents reported are viewed as unjustifiably made. It is considered that in the majority of*

*known harassment cases, the parties involved had entered into the relationship willingly, with no evidence of undue pressure made on one person by the other at that point.*

*What also comes out of this survey is that, in the eyes of many, intimacy at work is basically not a problem, is on the increase (or at least will not go away) and many report improvements in work performance resulting from the exhilaration of intimacy experiences. So, what is the problem that requires treatment and attention? …The level of attention given to sexual harassment in the academic literature and more popularly in the press and media is judged, from this survey, as questionable.* [13]

Only 11% of respondents felt that managers handled these problems well, and over half felt that managers should show greater tolerance by handling cases individually. With regard to frequency, the authors found that sexual harassment was extremely rare, even less common than a consummated homosexual relationship.

In terms of advice for professionals and managers, it is oriented towards the development of sensitivity rather than policies, guidelines or procedures.

*What so clearly emerges from this study is that no one can really tell you, the manager, or you the individual, what you should or should not do. Introducing more policies is unlikely to facilitate better quality working relationships, or discourage people from pursuing physical intimacy in the workplace or even reduce the number of harassment complaints. Assisting managers to understand and thus become more skilful at addressing personal sensitivities in the workplace, is the way forward...*

*….the sensitivity and skill of each manager to facilitate a way through emotionally complex situations is emphasised…In order to deal with intimacy, the challenge in the eyes of respondents is to determine just what is the problem at hand. The occurrence of intimacy, of itself, is not viewed as a concern.*[14]

This book begins where the Kakabadse's study ends. Their study describes the situation we currently face, but

stops short of describing in detail how intimacy develops. In this book, I have set out how intimacy develops as well as the ways that people control and inhibit the development of intimacy. I show how it is integrally linked to courtship (or courtship norms) as well as social advancement and leadership. Let me conclude this issue by commenting on the centrality of sexuality in working life.

## The Centrality of Sexuality

In 1987, two researchers – Jeff Hearns and Wendy Parkin – published their extensive review of a question that few people were prepared to ask. What is the role of sex at work? Their book is a landmark for revealing how sexuality is "an ordinary and frequent public process rather than an extraordinary and predominately private process" and "part of an all-pervasive body politic rather than a separate and discrete set of practices." [15]

On the whole, this particular book supports their conclusions. While others attempt to make a distinction between sexual roles and organisational roles[16], and argue that sex – while important – is not **that** important, this book supports the contention that surface disputes are frequently underpinned by sexual tensions between and among the genders, or rooted in deeply held sexual attitudes about "appropriate" and "inappropriate" behaviour. It is untenable – not to mention irrational - to argue that sexuality is unimportant while expressing views that are deeply rooted in sexual attitudes.

At a deeper level, however, is the issue of social acceptance. Some of the cases in this book hinge more on the question of whether a person is, or is not, accepted by their peers. While their sexual behaviour might be used as a way of drawing them in or pushing them out of a social group, the critical question is whether a person is an "insider" or "outsider". If they are an "insider", their sexual behaviour does not cause offence, and may even be encouraged; if they are regarded as an "outsider" (or recast as an "outsider" after previously being an "insider") sexual behaviour is reconstructed as inappropriate and

morally reprehensible. At this level, those who argue sex is **not** the most important consideration may have a point, even if dispute resolution is linked to sexual behaviours and attitudes.

The view I take, based on my own work, is that people are intimacy seekers, rather than sex seekers. Intimacy – while often linked to sexual behaviour – is conceptually different (a relationship might be *more* intimate if *less* sexual, for example). Intimacy, conceptually, is about being able to make private feelings public and have them listened to within a two-way conversation. This is extremely valuable in a business context. The ability to do this is not necessarily linked to sex, although a considerable body of evidence indicates that being able to talk freely to another contributes to sexual attraction.[17] This is, therefore, something of a chicken and egg argument – cause and effect work in *both* directions. We want to talk to those we are attracted to. We are attracted to those who are good at talking and listening.

## Patterns in the Data

In looking back over all the cases in this book, there is a pattern that recurs. Around each person who displays leadership qualities, or who is perceived by others to hold or be capable of holding a leadership position, there are number of recurrent findings:

- Larger numbers of exchanges - both social and financial – that create emotional and material dependency. Leaders (at all levels of an organisation) are at the nexus of emotional and material life, whether they seek to be or not.

- Leaders arouse stronger emotions (both inadvertently and deliberately) as a by-product of entrepreneurial, managerial and leadership behaviour.

- Those regarded as leaders attract relationships (both inside and outside the workplace): these may be instrumental or sexual, but they arouse jealousy and hostility as well as the desire to love and care.

- In each relationship that is intended to be long-term, the most productive dynamic is towards equity, reciprocity and informality. This dynamic also creates mutual attraction.

- In each relationship that is **not** intended to be long-term, the most productive dynamic is inequity, asymmetry and formality. This dynamic inhibits mutual attraction.

Whatever philosophy we adopt and teach others, people repeatedly win respect and love from others by demonstrating their ability to take responsibility, contribute economically, and handle social conflict. The platform for men and women to demonstrate they can 'perform' these skills is overwhelmingly the workplace. In as much as these qualities attract sexual partners, and lead to long-term relationships, the behaviours can be regarded as courtship rituals. What is more, employers generally encourage such behaviours in managers and senior staff, and promote them for it. This leads to greater sexual activity around 'successful' people for the simple reason that their behaviours are attractive and sexy.

While it is supposed that these are 'masculine' behaviours, Betty Friedan found that sexual activity is also more common amongst women who are successful in the workplace:

> *The transcendence of self, in sexual orgasm, as in creative experience, can only be attained by one who is himself, or herself, complete, by one who has realized his or her own identity. In the years between the 'emancipation' of women…and the sexual counter-revolution, American women enjoyed a decade-by-decade increase in sexual orgasm. And the women who enjoyed this most fully were, above all, the women who went furthest on the road to self-realization, women who were educated for active participation in the world outside the home.*[18]

Friedan links emotional maturity to engagement in the wider world. Our identity is not something that we find alone; it is something that we establish through our relationships with others. Moreover, sexual knowledge,

in particular the giving and receiving of care and pleasure is not the most "primitive" part of a human being. It is the most evolved aspect of humanity, a place where we discover and reach the limits of our emotional development:

> *…the most 'emancipated' women, women educated beyond college for professional careers, showed a far greater capacity for complete sexual enjoyment, full orgasm, than the rest. The Kinsey figures showed that women who married before twenty were least likely to experience sexual orgasm, and were likely to enjoy it less frequently in or out of marriage, though they started sexual intercourse five or six years earlier…*[19]

What separates the two groups of women – in Friedan's argument – is education rather than the availability of sexual contact. Friedan, however, assumes there is a cause and effect link between education and sexual emancipation. What if the link is the other way around? What if the capacity to get to know people is the key to the development of social intelligence and career success?

Some studies have found that skills that contribute to intelligence and academic achievement are more strongly correlated with patterns of communication in family life than factors such as class, gender or ethnicity. People growing up in families that debate issues freely develop children's capacity for openness, self-reflection and intimacy[20]. These skills, in turn, have been repeatedly linked to the critical judgement that develops general intelligence.[21] Like the argument about intimacy and sex, the argument about intimacy and career success is another chicken and egg situation because the benefits are mutually reinforcing.

This provides an added incentive for managers to improve their knowledge of sexuality and emotional development. As a group, they are more sought after and more likely to have to cope with close relationships than the people they manage.[22]

As Andy commented at the conclusion of his interview:

*People wonder if the most efficient social structure is a man supported by women who adore him, with other men who accept subordination to his authority. I am not sure. That arrangement is going to discriminate against a great many men who will be eased out of the way. It also discriminates against women (because they can't ever get to be a leading male).*

*What I have learnt, slowly, is that it also discriminates against leading men who feel pushed into roles without seeking or wanting them. I did not ask to be recognised as our manager until it had been drummed into me by others that I was already leading everything. It changed my self-image and probably my behaviour. But once recognised as the leader, my behaviour changed again because I expected to control things. But others became more controlling too – and criticised me much more. It caused resentment both ways.*

*I felt I resisted the 'power and privilege' normally taken for granted by leading males because I thought it would create a problem if I became too intimate with the women. What I now realise is that the jealousy occurs anyway, whether physical intimacy takes place or not. People thought that I was, or that I wanted to be, having affairs with women at work. For me, it was enough to enjoy the attraction, fantasies and dreams. If there is shared knowledge of mutual attraction with a woman it can be exciting, but the result is more often lasting friendship than a sexual relationship. That is special in its own right.*

*If I had started a relationship it might have cost me my marriage and family life. Even though I did not, others' speculation upset both me and my wife – I still get extremely angry about that. These are the most acute dilemmas we have faced, but somehow we managed to navigate through them. People were hurt sometimes, including myself, but more often a lot of goodwill was generated. Over the years, respect and friendship has been*

*a far more common outcome, and my marriage is still a close one.*[23]

## The Case for Change

In discussing this book with a friend - a client for 16 years and a life-long trade unionist - she told me a story that highlights the need for new ways to investigate sexual conflict and the danger of failing to investigate what lies behind people's feelings in a dispute.

Her son, Robert[24], works for a trade union. A while ago, Robert had to handle a complaint that Wendy had been sexually assaulted by Martin, her co-worker, at an office party. Robert took on the case and represented Wendy. Martin vehemently protested his innocence: his wife would not believe him and his marriage broke down. As Martin had been accused of a sexual offence, his wife secured a court order to keep him away from his children.

During this period, Robert's doubts grew about Wendy's story. She had got drunk and, when questioned, could not (or would not) recall what had happened to her. Eventually, she admitted coming home late, and drunk, and having a row with her boyfriend. Eventually, Wendy admitted she lied. She was attracted to Martin but wanted to hide this from her boyfriend. She felt trapped inside the process that her allegation had started and was too afraid to admit the truth. She delayed. Martin, however, having lost the wife and children sank into a deep depression. He committed suicide.

When we leap too quickly to a person's defence, a process begins that affects many people. What occupied our minds as we talked about this story in the pub was the unstoppability and destructive power of an investigation process that, theoretically, is designed to protect people. There is an urgent need for investigators and managers to handle sexual conflict in a new way. In the next section, some of the thoughts that were generated by that conversation (and the book as a whole) are set out.

## New Approaches to Handling Conflict

For a person attempting to understand a conflict, the question that could start every investigation is "how is the *accuser* hurting?" or "why does the accuser feel a need to make an accusation?" It may be wise not to widen the scope of a dispute until the circumstances of the *accusation* are understood. To accuse, there must either be a moral principle at stake, an interest that has to be defended, or an anger than seeks an outlet. Initially – before shifting focus to the accused, establish the balance between these three.

If possible, search back through events with the accuser to trace any source of emotional hurt (remembering that it may come from somewhere else in the accuser's life and is not necessarily the outcome of their relationship with the accused). If you cannot shed any light, start to involve the accused. Initially, you are still trying to understand the reason for the accusation from the point of view of the *accuser*, not the accused.

If you bring the parties together, let the parties be emotional – it provides information. Avoid taking sides – the objective is not blame. The objective is to stimulate dialogue so that you, and they, can understand the source of emotional hurt and shed light on the hidden dynamics of the conflict.

If you find yourself displaying emotions, consider how the outcome of the dispute affects your own interests. Does your emotionality betray a desire for a closer relationship with one party? Is one party particularly important to achieving your own personal (or organisational) goals and objectives? Talk to someone outside the dispute about your own emotions to shed some light on them. No-one is completely impartial and you may still be the best person to mediate.

If it is a gender dispute, remember that most men want close relationships with women more than with other men, and women want close relationships with men more than other women (except for lesbian and gay women and men). "The other" is often perceived as the source of emotional hurt but this does not necessarily mean it is true. Hurt is a reflection of *our own* desire, *our own*

sense of loss. We hurt most when we cannot fulfil *our* desires (and the bigger the gap between our desires and reality, the greater our hurt). Find out, if possible, what event **changed** the relationship. What did each party say to the other? Could it be an outcome of changes outside work?

If somebody is deeply distressed, establish if it comes from a sense of loss (remembering always there is a 60% chance in the case of a woman – and possibly also in the case of men – that they will not divulge their sexual feelings under any circumstances). Talk carefully. On a one-to-one basis, ask them to describe the relationship *from the beginning*. This will give you a sense of how the relationship evolved and changed.

Support people through loss. If no loss is found, find out why people feel violated. Does the person need protection? If not, then mediate as soon as possible. If yes, then seek professional advice.

Both women and men hurt - it is not women's or men's problem alone and can only be solved together. Men fear showing their feelings, not always because they are ashamed, but because experience has taught them that expressing feelings will lose them the respect of the woman (or women) they currently want to love them, or their male friends and colleagues. Women and men *teach men* this by calling them "losers", "wimps" or "sissy" whenever they show feelings that reveal their vulnerability. Men and women, on the other hand, *teach women* to be 'submissive' by rushing to comfort them when they become distressed. The more beautiful the woman, the quicker people will seek to help. Remember why.

Bear in mind that these responses are fairly automatic – internalised during childhood/adolescence (in much the same way as Pavlov and his dogs). They are continually reinforced during courtship and through films, TV programmes, magazines, books and stories.

They can also be unlearnt (see Chapter 2). Gendered responses are not a good indicator of who is being truthful and who is truly hurting. Women may cry to avoid having to talk. Men may cry, but are more likely – due to cultural conditioning – to become angry as a way to get (or deflect) attention.[25] Both crying and anger may be genuine or affected responses. They may be honest or a "performance" to win hearts and minds.[26]

When we know that women are no more likely to be physically harmed in personal relationships than men[27], our attitude to both men and women changes. When we know that men's feelings are hurt as much as women's, but they do not show this, our attitude changes again. When we understand that women are more creative and convincing liars (because they cannot resort so readily to physical force to win their fights), and that men are less good at hiding their lies (because they are punished more readily and frequently for lying during childhood) our attitude changes even more[28]. We start to understand that men need as much protection from tale telling as women need from physical violence or rape.

Women who understand men are no more inherently violent than themselves will no longer feel a need for special protection. Although they will continue to fear violence from men more than from women, they will begin to understand this is the response of any person who desires to be with them, but cannot be so. Men who start to understand that women are as violent as themselves will no longer feel such a need to give them special protection. If they do, they will come to understand this as a product of their desire to be a hero to the women who watch them, and part of *their own* need to win approval from women.

## The Case for Mediation

Mediation offers a solution that is consistent with the values and goals of both democracy and gender equality. It affords protection to <u>all</u> the parties regardless of status, ethnicity or gender. Critics of mediation (or "restorative justice" as it is called in criminology) worry that

mediation simply gives the perpetrator another opportunity to intimidate the victim. At this stage, however, it is not clear who is perpetrator and who is victim. The apparent victim may be the perpetrator - it is the mediation process that helps to determine this.[29]

Mediation is hard work – it may involve participants coming to terms with deeply held prejudices, or face up to the full impact of their behaviour on others. But it also gives them a chance to explain their intent and for others to learn why they *responded* in a particular way. The process may not be quick or easy. The alternative, however, is a workplace culture – and society generally – that pays lip service to fairness and equality but takes refuge in defensive approaches to conflict.

To support change, build the process of mediation into employment and trading contracts[30] so that investors and entrepreneurs, employers and employees, customers and suppliers, face penalties under the law for authoritarian approaches to conflict resolution. These laws are the ones we can create for ourselves for our own organisations – they are not imposed by government statute. Consequently, no acts of parliament need to be passed for these laws to come into effect – they can be brought about by changes in management understanding and practice.

This way, **existing** laws will stop favouring the party who unilaterally withdraws and start favouring those committed to reconciliation. The laws would start to reward compassion and tolerance. Individual businesses taking initiatives to switch to mediation as a tool of social control will be entrenching democratic values without ever having to involve a politician! What greater incentive do you need?

## Compulsion and Conflict

The argument that nobody can be forced to mediate is a common one. This is true. But should we *reward* people who will not commit to mediation when it is unclear how the dispute started? While an argument can be made that compelling people to enter mediation is a waste of time, the current situation compels people into conflict.

Neither legal arrangement is neutral - both are rooted in ideological commitments.

Mediation permits the employer to make equal opportunity a reality at all levels in an organisation. It is a good way to protect all parties and promote gender, racial and other forms of equality. It does not presume which party is right, or seek to make one party accept responsibility for conflict in advance of discussing the emotional hurt that underpins the dispute. Nor does it allow either party to walk away (whether accuser or accused) and avoid accountability for their actions.

If mediation is required by contract, then refusal to mediate is a breach of contract. This leaves the withdrawer liable for losses. Nevertheless, mediation will only ever provide a partial solution, not a complete one. How much balance there should be in the legal instruments that govern a company is a matter of judgement.

The question for managers, directors, lawyers and politicians is "which ideological commitments are most likely to improve trade and civil society?" If the right to withdraw is considered more important than the responsibility to engage, the party who willingly commits to a relationship and seek solutions collaboratively can be accused of 'harassment' simply for pursuing an equitable outcome to a shared problem. To those with democratic aspirations, the defensive "right" to withdraw is **not** more important than the constructive "responsibility" to engage.

At present, a falsely accused party is coerced by the legal options available to bring actions against people they like – simply to achieve a modicum of justice. The legal route, therefore, increases the division and fragmentation of our society (to the financial benefit of lawyers). It does little to heal conflict and promote social cohesion. By making it prohibitively expensive and difficult for people to practice democracy (i.e. the right-to-reply, the responsibility to engage) the pursuit of a democratic society is made more difficult.

Nothing here says that people **must** have relationships with others, or that people cannot withdraw from relationships. What it does encourage, however, is that

withdrawal is negotiated and undertaken in such a way that knowledge is generated. This is respectful behaviour and allows people to process their emotions, even if doing so means enduring some pain.

An option to unilaterally withdraw must remain. It will be essential for those in abusive relationships, or in relationships where one party will not consent to the withdrawal of the other after mediation. The law, however, will do more good than harm if it permits unilateral withdrawal only when equity cannot be established by mediation.

## Reconstructing the Gender Debate

At present, the foundation of our legal-rational society is rooted in the principle of self-defence, buttressed by a court system that adjudicates and judges disputes. This system, however, has recently (i.e. over the last 200 years) been imbued by individualist philosophy to the point that personal sovereignty, rather than community relationships, has taken centre stage. Personal sovereignty *is* important, but not to the exclusion of community relationships (any more than 'community' can be used to exclude personal rights). The struggle, always, is to achieve both.

By constructing the world differently, we can change our place and the practices within it. This starts with a changed understanding of the way sexual desire influences our lives. The most critical decision each of us makes – one that affects the way we see the world and other people in it – is whether to have, or not have, a relationship that leads to children. When we talk of the battle between the sexes, we miss that human life is overwhelmingly guided by the desires of men to be with women, and women's to be with men. These desires permeate all aspects of our culture making it hard to see their impact.

For those who may think I am marginalizing lesbian and gay couples, this is not my intention. Around 10% of men and women have such relationships at some point in their life, but only 1-2% of all sexual activity is between

people of the same sex.[31] Heterosexuality dominates our culture for the simple reason that the majority of men/women want children at some time in their life.

When men and women do have children together, their biology impacts more strongly on their lives. Generally, men intensify their commitment to wealth-creation (because they cannot suckle their child) while women intensify their commitment to child raising (because they can suckle their child). It does not *have* to be so, but there are many good health reasons for continually reproducing this division of labour (at least in the short term).

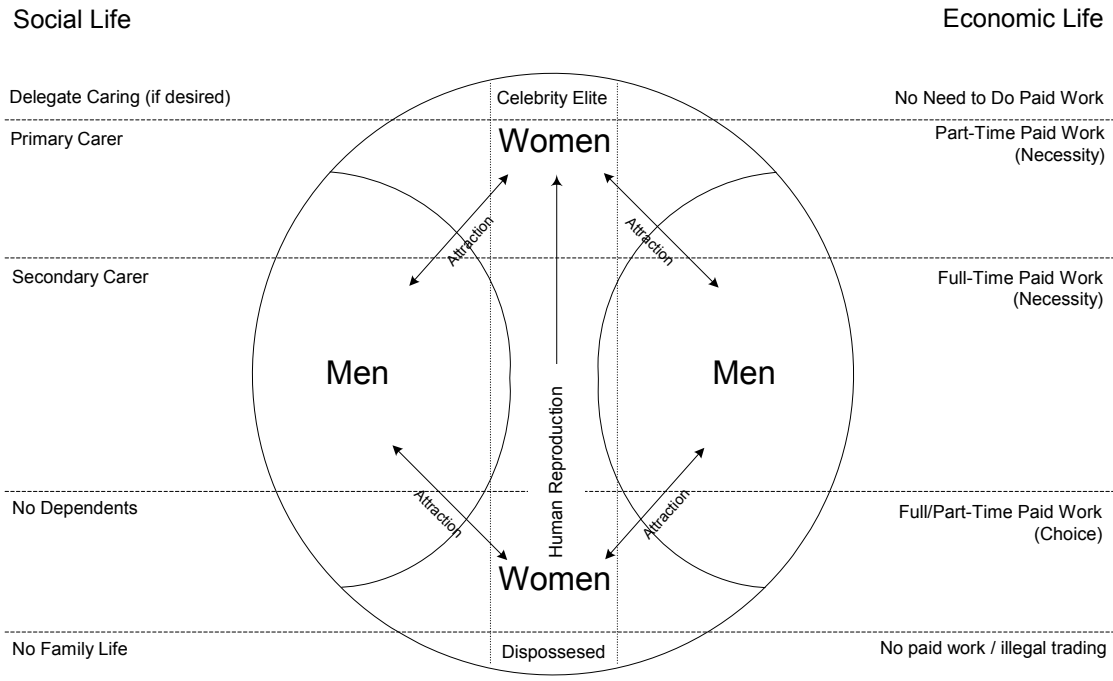
In most households, the arrival of a child is accompanied by a drop in joint income. For this reason, wealth-creating skills become critically important at the very time the household workforce is temporarily cut in half. It is for this reason that higher earning *men* have more children (and are pursued more as sexual partners). This division of labour cannot be abolished without preventing men and women from raising their own children. No human society has (yet) thrived under a political system that denies parents the right to raise their children. In my view, no such society could ever thrive.

As men and women work together to raise children, they have to contend with two ways of looking at the world. One way is to prioritise human reproduction and see work as 'a job' to support the family. The other way is to prioritise 'wealth creation' and see the world of home as something that provides future workers for additional wealth creation. In 2005, I constructed these two views to illustrate the impact they have on each other.[32]

For those whose priority is human reproduction, the world takes on the following character. In Figure 7, only the celebrity elite can avoid working. In other households, even primary carers find a way to contribute to wealth creation. Secondary carers are primarily concerned with wealth creation as their contribution to child raising. This affects their emotional connection to family life. Those with no dependents have more choices. Usually, single people embed themselves in workplaces or friendship networks, but in some cases the loss of family

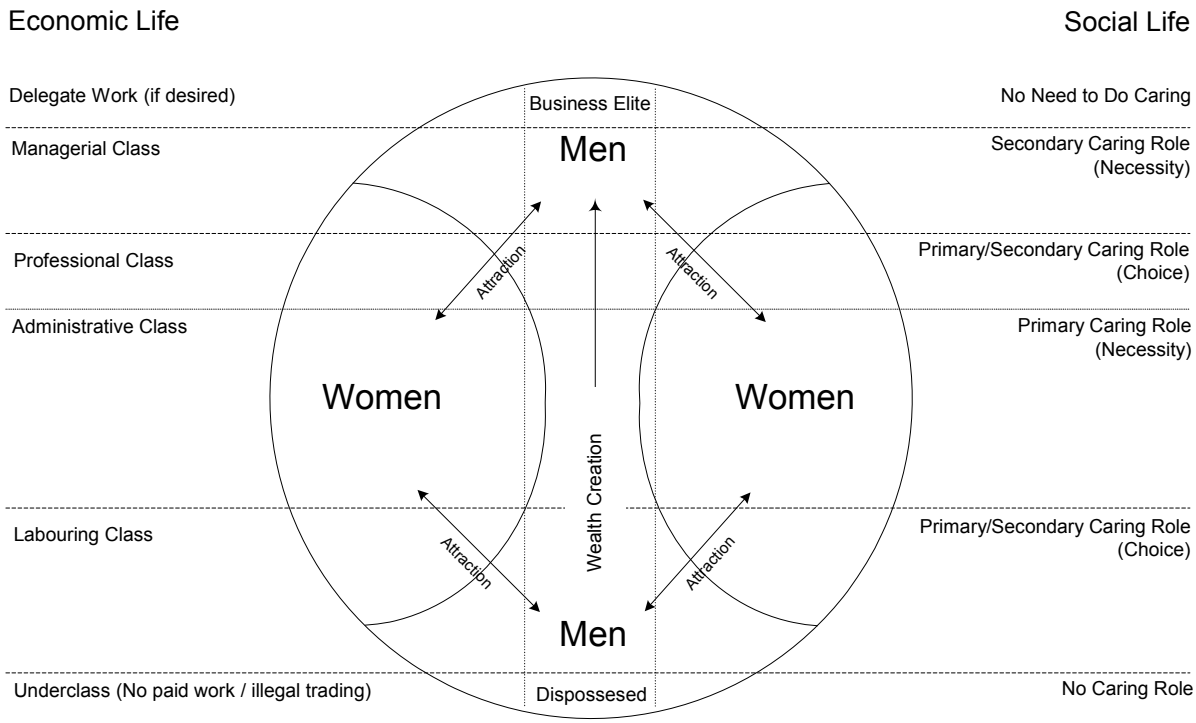
life creates an enduring sense of disconnection. This perspective contrasts with the one in Figure 8.

**Figure 7 – Economic Life from a Socially Rational Perspective**




In Figure 8, the elite are constituted by those whose wealth creates further wealth sufficient to live off the proceeds. These elites are small, however. Others have to work. The best paid careers are in management and the professions. Management, however, is a full-time occupation that prevents people from playing anything other than a secondary role in child raising. The professions can be more flexible (particularly later in life) allowing couples to share child raising if they wish. People in the administrative and labouring classes – because they are involved in the repetitive tasks associated with direct production – more often regard friendship networks, human reproduction and child raising as sources of emotional stimulation and well-being.

## Figure 8 – Social Life from an Economically Rational Perspective




The unacknowledged aspect of the gender debate is the way men divide women into those they will and will not support at home, while women divide men into those they will and will not support at work. The balance can change, individual couples can choose how to divide their responsibilities, but institutions in society tend to reinforce divisions of labour created during the early months of child raising. Moreover, men and women frequently seek to confirm or develop their social identity through commitment to (or by fighting against) their biological role.

Presenting these outlooks helps us to understand that neither is 'right' or 'wrong': both are required to raise future generations. We need a constant debate about the dividing line and the way that men and women accept or allocate responsibilities. My preference is that the dividing lines should be as flexible as possible and always open to debate. Under these conditions, I believe that both human emancipation and economic efficiency become more possible. Others argue, however, that people should be encouraged toward roles 'intended' by

nature (i.e. a biological norm) or one determined by religious faith (i.e. a moral norm). From a human rights and democratic perspective, however, the benevolence of these positions needs to be carefully evaluated.

## Leaders, Performers and Followers

The second way to reconstruct the world is to change the way we understand the relationship between performers, leaders and followers. Think of the last time your saw dolphins performing tricks at an aquarium, or on the television. The audience is all around – almost like a political rally, pop concert or sporting event. The audience marvel at how well the dolphins are trained, how intelligent they are, how they have human-like intelligence. The cleverer the tricks they perform, the more the audience is amazed, the more it claps. And when the performance is over, the dolphins are regarded as the stars: they are the attraction that draws in the crowds.

We know, however, that the dolphins will not be released back to the wild while their performances can draw in the crowds. In fact, the *better* their performance, the *less* likely it is that they will be allowed to run free again. They are in captivity and will remain so until their captors – people who are generally not in the public eye – agree to let them go or 'the market' demands to see dolphins in the wild rather than in captivity. The dolphins, in this analogy, are performers. They draw the applause.

Imagine that one dolphin – a particularly intelligent dolphin – decides not to cooperate. This dolphin decides that there are better things to do with his or her life than perform tricks to obtain applause. How will they appear to others? They might appear to be rebelling. They might even appear to be sick. Those who train the dolphin - perplexed at the transformation in this dolphin's behaviour – may not grasp that the dolphin may simply want to be as free as they are, or to follow different goals than those that have been prescribed without their consent. How might the trainer react to a dolphin with

'no discipline' (i.e. one intelligent enough to want something better than a life performing tricks)? They might put the dolphin in a zoo (i.e. restrain or imprison it). They might destroy the dolphin (i.e. murder it).

Can the most intelligent people in society be compared to the dolphins that will not be trained? We are slower to applaud those who perform tricks less often and less readily. When we characterise a person concerned with their own emancipation as 'selfish' perhaps we miss what it is that promotes human freedom. Where dolphins are concerned, we never mistake the performance of tricks as a sign of either "freedom" or "leadership", no matter how much the dolphin may seem to be enjoying the performance. We realise in an instant that no matter how well they are treated, no matter how much money they attract, no matter what standard of luxury accommodation they have at their disposal, they are still captives performing for the rest of us.

So it is with sports stars, rock stars, political leaders and "charismatic" businesspeople. They have been trained. They may be intelligent, but their intelligence may not extend as far as understanding that their vanity is exploited to increase their performance efforts. Many burn-out performing for others. Others realise before they burn out. It is a serious intellectual mistake to consider them leaders, even though they may obtain the trappings of success.

Ralph finally realised this (see Chapter 5). With a push from his wife Ginny, he finally started to contemplate how deeply he had been trained. Once the penny dropped, however, he found that he was ridiculed by his fellow "leaders" (which is what exposes them as followers rather than leaders). Ralph gained the respect of other men from all social classes who appreciated his growing self-awareness. He also gained the respect of his wife. Together they started to look at the world in a new way – one in which they started to see the shallow rhetoric of stardom and performance. They began to realise that their working lives were similar to a Big Brother TV show – a "reality show" for the amusement and satisfaction of others' financial and emotional gain. Their own rewards, however, were pegged to their capacity to entertain

(regardless of whether the product of their performance was really needed or not).

A long term goal worth striving for, however, is to achieve as much independence as possible so that we can spend as much time as possible with the people, and doing the things, we love. This might be at work, at home, or a combination of both. It does not necessarily require that we scale the ladders of the corporate world to reach the top – there are few places on earth where a person has less independence. We each need to develop sufficient craft that we can assemble, and become part of a social network that we wish to support, and which wishes to support us. This goal is within the reach of most of us. With greater tolerance for diversity, it should be within reach of more of us. It does not require big business or huge government interventions to be achieved (just their political support and tolerance).

## Powerful Relationships are Tolerant

Enforcing equality – indeed enforcing anything – is not usually the best solution because it destroys the natural enthusiasm that people have for each other and the things they like to do together. We do not need quotas to ensure equality of opportunity. Rather, we need the reverse - that such policies are eliminated so that institutional energies divert from enforcement (of rules, behaviours, ideologies) towards mediation and dialogue.

In this way, social values and systems of governance will start to be flexible rather than dogmatic, democratic rather than totalitarian, and will reflect diverse personal and shared ideologies. Reflection will gradually replace blame and judgement: rules will give way to interpersonal sensitivity. We can then, hopefully, see some shrinkage in the legal profession in favour of trading organisations that contribute to the quality of our lives as well as the wealth of our communities.

The result could be substantial and continuing differences in the lifestyles of men and women that may not please political, corporate or thought-leaders. Or we may find that free from institutional interference women and men choose lifestyles that become more equitable.

Whichever, behind statistics that suggest discrimination will be personal choices emanating from the fusion and tension created by our desire for intimacy and social advancement. As more autonomy – within the bounds of equitable relationships – becomes possible, emotional development will increase our capacity for social democracy. Economic life within the firm, not just in the marketplace, will start to be determined by the aspirations of the many rather than the control of the few.

## Notes on Chapter 7

[1] Kakabadse, A., Kakabadse, N. (2004) *Intimacy: International Survey of the Sex Lives of People at Work,* Palgrave. The authors distinguish between emotional and physical intimacy in their study, but their definition is restricted to sexual relationships. In my own work, I argue that intimacy is broader than this – that it can apply to non-sexual same-sex relationships as well as sexual relationships. Goldberg describes intimate relationships between men as being 'buddies' – he devotes a chapter to the lost art of buddyship in his book "The Hazards of Being Male".

[2] *ibid*, p. 57

[3] *ibid,* pp. 72-73

[4] *ibid,* p. 62

[5] *ibid,* p. 88

[6] *ibid,* p. 90

[7] *ibid,* p. 124

[8] *ibid,* p. 78

[9] Farrell, W. (1986) *Why Men Are The Way They Are,* London, Bantam Books, Chapter 5 ("Why Men Don't Listen"). In a later book "Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say", the author reports that it can take as long as 6 months of group support or therapy before men develop sufficient trust to reveal their true feelings about intimate relationships.

[10] Public anger and fear, that is. For a discussion of men's fear of women see Lynne Segal's "Slow Motion: Changing Men: Changing Masculinities", or Warren Farrell's "Why Men Are The Way They Are". Much 'macho' behaviour is a way to hide fear. The fear does not go away, however, it gets internalised and later surfaces in medical conditions such as ulcers and heart attacks.

[11] This comment was made to me by a qualified psychologist at one of my research sites. To protect the identity of the company, the name of the psychologist will not be divulged.

[12] The same dilemmas occurs in same-sex (lesbian and gay) relationships.

[13] Kakabadse, A., Kakabadse, N. (2004) *Intimacy: International Survey of the Sex Lives of People at Work,* Palgrave, p. 5

[14] ibid, Chapter 4 summaries advice to managers, and recommendations for management training.

15 Hearn, J., Parkin, W. (1987) *Sex at Work: the power and paradox of organisation sexuality*, Wheatsheaf, p. 57

16 Ackroyd, S., Thompson, P. (1999) *Organizational Misbehaviour,* Sage Publications, Chapter 6.

17 Aronson, E (2003) *The Social Animal,* Ninth Edition, New York: Worth Publishers, Chapter 8.

18 Friedan, B. (1963) *The Feminine Mystique,* Penguin Books, p. 282, 284

19 *ibid,* p. 284

20 Huang, Li-Ning (1999) "Family Communication Patterns and Personality Characteristics"*, Communication Quarterly*, , ProQuest Education Journals, 47(2): 230-243

21 Moutafi, J et al. (2002) "Demographic and personality predictors of intelligence: a study using the Neo Personality Inventory and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator", *European Journal of Personality,* 17(1): 79-94.

22 Buss, D. (1994) *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating,* New York: Basic Books

23 Adapted from post-interview comments by Andy and Pauline, rechecked with the interviewees.

24 As with all the other cases, the names are fictional to hide true identities.

25 Pease, A., Pease, B. (2003) *Why Men Lie and Women Cry,* Orion.

26 Goffman, E. (1969) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

27 This is a finding in western cultures only. In African, Asian and Far Eastern cultures, findings vary, but the few English language studies available indicate that women are more likely to be harmed than men.

28 O'Connell, S. (1998) *An Investigation into How We Learn to Love and Lie,* Doubleday.

29 Roche, D. (2003) "Gluttons for restorative justice", *Economy and Society,* 32(4): 630-644. This interesting article reviews two leading texts by criminologists on research into restorative justice. Concerns remain, but in the context of sexual disputes there is one particularly interesting finding. The restorative justice schemes that have been most successful are those where the 'crimes' trigger the

strongest emotions. As sexual disputes evoke particularly strong emotions, this strengthens the case for restorative justice when they occur.

30 And Company Law perhaps, as a way of rebuilding confidence in corporate governance!

31 Johnson, A. M., Mercer, C. H., Erans, B., Copas, A. J., McManus, S., Wellings, K., Fenton, K. A., Korovessis, C., Macdowell, W., Nanchahal, K., Purdon, S., Field, J. (2001), "Sexual behaviour in Britain: Partnerships, Practices, and HIV risk behaviours", *The Lancet*, 358: 1835-1842. This study shows that just over 60% of men/women were in committed relationships in the year 2000, the same percentage as a decade before. Despite media publicity promoting 'singledom' as a lifestyle, combining the number of unmarried and marriage couples shows that the number of people in "committed" relationships is unchanged. Homosexual encounters are a much lower percentage of all sexual activity than the percentage of people reporting they have had homosexual relationships. This is because people experiment with homosexuality while still practising heterosexuality most of the time.

32 Ridley-Duff, R. J. (2005) *Communitarian Perspectives on Corporate Governance,* PhD Thesis, Sheffield Hallam University.

# Chapter 8 - Closing Thoughts….

## Conclusions

The management strategies suggested throughout this book involve a number of inter-related actions. To understand ourselves as social beings, we must once again connect how our emotional, sexual and material desires are interlinked by:

- Understanding the relationship between emotion and action.
- Committing to mutual understanding, not blame or "truth", on questions of social organisation.
- Committing to supporting **both** parties in emotive disputes, so that all parties develop their social knowledge.
- Committing to mediation, not discipline and punishment, in sexual, tribal or racial conflicts, with the goal of mutual understanding.
- Committing to understanding *our own* motives and interests before punishing others.

These principles change the source of professional advice that supports a business. In particular, the strategy implies:

- Reduced use of lawyers to advise on handling relationship and contractual disputes.
- Use of educational specialists to develop understanding of cultures and relationship dynamics.
- Changes to practices, policies and legal documents (company constitutions, employment contracts, procurement contracts) to reward conflict resolution through mediation.

- Changes to legal documents to penalise unilateral withdrawal before mediation.

In terms of governance, the principle of choice can be extended into the social fabric of the organisation by:

- Decentralising governance structures and creating separate bodies for operational, social and strategic decision-making.
- Electing governors to create 'authority loops' rather than 'hierarchies' of control.
- Supporting ideologies and values that embrace diversity rather than conformance.

The ability to overcome adversity through dialogue is the foundation of any lasting relationship, business partnership and a democratic society. The result, however emotionally satisfying, should not be mistaken for utopian bliss and social harmony. Democracy exposes the dirt as well as the gold in our hearts. Turning this to advantage is a skill, one that is hard won and difficult to sustain. Well organised democracies preserve their commitment to diversity and allow dissent. Nor do its advocates ever confuse dissent with disloyalty. They support robust, vibrant and noisy debate in decision-making and the production of new knowledge. Into this bear pit I contribute these pages in the hope that it will encourage you to contribute your own.

# Appendix A – Body Language

## Introduction

It is possible to spot emotions in people and yourself by being aware of combinations of speech, vocal, body language and facial codes. The notes below were made in preparation for anthropological field work by reading a number of books on body language, particularly Lillian Glass's book on codes of communication. These are not the only, or necessarily the best, just the ones that I found most helpful in understanding non-verbal ways that people communicate in Anglo-American cultures. The gestures are less reliable for Southern European, African and Asian cultures. Other books include *Body Language,* by Alan Pease, and *The Definitive Guide to Body Language*, by Alan and Barbara Pease and *People Watching: The Desmond Morris Guide to Body Language*.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Honesty/Openness:** | *Speech:* Generous praise, care that what is said is appropriate in circumstances, gets to the point, co-operative, compassionate, interested (not trying to be interesting)<br><br>*Voice:* Deep, lively, varied pitch, robust tone, conveying emotion<br><br>*Body:* Learning towards or to one side, palms showing, fingers extended, relaxed arms or arms behind back or head, feet together, legs apart, not crossed or crossed knee on knee in comfortable position, no make-up (women only), hair groomed forward, tasteful clothes<br><br>*Face:* Smiling with both cheeks raised, relaxed eyes, soft gaze, strong direct eye contact |
| **Attraction:** | *Speech:* (as above – but with additional body/face behaviours)<br><br>*Voice:* (as above - but with additional body/face behaviours)<br><br>*Body:* (as above accompanied by…) copying or mimicking body movements, body aligned with feet to face person, sideways glancing with head lowered, quick left to right glancing, shoulder shrugging (women only)<br><br>*Face:* (as above accompanied by…) frequent eye contact - particularly a relaxed gaze held for more than 2 seconds, smiling while raising/dropping eyebrows quickly. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Hostility/Jealousy:** | *Speech:* "I was only kidding" behaviour. Saying few words, or not answering questions. Gossiping. Cursing.<br><br>*Voice:* Rising pitch, increasing volume, deliberate softness or loudness, sudden bursts of loudness, nasal, deliberate slowness<br><br>*Body:* Standing too close, quick movement forward of head or body, arms akimbo, clenched fists, crushing handshake.<br><br>*Face:* Deadpan staring unflickering eyes, jutting chin, tight scrunched up eyes, gulping (combined with tight eyes). |
| **Disrespect/Dislike:** | *Speech:* Slang or curse words, limited verbal repertoire, politically incorrect language. "Cut You Down" behaviour, failure to listen, talking without listening, unsettling innuendo.<br><br>*Voice:* Forced low pitch, loudness, loud bursts, nasal, harsh, gravely tones, slow or deliberate speaking<br><br>*Body:* Standing too far away, leaning back, head retracting or shaking, closed posture (arms crossed, legs crossed above knee, turning body away), squeezing/pinching nose, calm talking with clench fist, walking with chin raised.<br><br>*Face:* Smile with dropped cheeks, avoiding gaze, gaze with lowered knitted eyebrows, gulping while listening (with deadpan eyes), hand to mouth while listening, lip biting and head shaking while listening. |
| **Lying/Holding Back:** | *Speech:* Indirect explanations, over full explanations, hesitation, repeating words, stuttering, over complimentary, mumbling.<br><br>*Voice:* Nasal, breathy or harsh/gravely voice, dull/lifeless tone, over sweet sugary tone.<br><br>*Body:* Quick involuntary shoulder shrug, hidden, tense, folded away hands, ankle locking, legs crossed above knee, foot on heel or side.<br><br>*Face:* Phoney smile (cheeks not raised), touching eye, nose or mouth while speaking, clenched fist with calm voice, licking lips while talking |
| **Doubting/Disbelief:** | *Body:* Rocking, fidgeting, side-to-side head movement, crossed arms/legs (above knee), stiff thumb or forming a fist with hand, pinching or squeezing nose, putting fingers to mouth, foot locking, ankle locking,<br><br>*Face:* Deadpan expression, smiling (cheeks not raised), eyes wide with lips apart, single raised eyebrow, eye look up to ceiling, avoiding eye contact, gulping, knitted eyebrows, laughing (without smile), hand touches mouth or eye, rubbing cheek, rubbing ear between thumb and forefinger. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Fear/Insecurity:** | *Speech:* Self-praise, joke telling, talking without listening, giving private information, long words, conciliatory behaviour, putting self down, diminishing own achievements.<br><br>*Voice:* High pitched or soft voice, sexy/breathy voice, talking too fast, pitching up at end of sentence.<br><br>*Body:* Rocking, fidgeting, constant nodding, slumped shoulders, 'posing', crossed arms, playing with pen/jewellery, touching face, pinching nose, trendy sexy or loud clothing, hair combed to side, changing hairstyles, bitten nails, over-meticulous grooming<br><br>*Face:* Excessive blinking, avoiding eye contact, inappropriate smiling/laughing. |
| **Feeling Intimidated:** | *Speech:* "Cut you down" behaviour, contradicting, "I don't know", short answers, avoiding answers.<br><br>*Voice:* Shaky<br><br>*Body:* Closing off, withdrawing (crossing arms, turning away), foot locking, 'get-me-out-of-here' posture, hunched walk<br><br>*Face:* Deadpan expression, breaks a gaze and eyes go down, avoiding eye contact, lowering eyebrows, inappropriate laughing, retracting chin to rest on neck. |

# Speech Code

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Great Communication* | Generous, Kind, Careful, Appropriate, Succinct, Listener, Co-operative, Compassionate | Concerned about person to whom they are speaking. Interest*ed*, rather than interest*ing*. Nothing to prove. | Honesty, sincerity, good/terrific person |
| *I Was Only Kidding* | Playful Sarcasm/Rudeness, Cutting Humour | "Only kidding"; "Where's your sense of humour?"; "Lighten up"; "Can't you take a joke?" | Hostility, jealousy, negative feelings, suppressed anger. |
| *Verbally Unconscious* | Unaware or ignorant, distracted, outdated language | Slang or curse words, limited verbal repertoire, politically incorrect language | Disrespect, low regard for others |
| *Contradictor* | Contradicts another, seeks to embarrass or compete | Constantly contradict what is said by others | Insecure, mean-spirited, disrespectful, feeling threatened. |
| *Cut-You-Downer* | Compliment followed by qualification that undermines it, or make undermining comments | Use of absolutes "never", "always", black and white terms, talking at (not with) people | Disrespect, jealousy, feeling threatened |
| *Chatterbox* | Talks Constantly, won't allow others time to speak | Don't wait for answers, insensitivity to others, trouble getting off the phone | Distracted, can't confront feelings, narcissist, fear of abandonment |
| *Gossiper* | Speaks ill of others<br>Adds disparaging comments | Distort what is said<br>Unable to keep a secret | Jealous, sneaky, competitive, duplicitous, may want to hurt or destroy |
| *Topic Flitter* | Flit from topic to topic<br>Changes conversation to self<br>Difficult to follow | Short attention span. only seems happy when conversation centred on self | Narcissism, selfish, manipulative |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *My, Myself, and I* | Compulsive need to talk about self<br>Self-praise | Attention seeking, may use humour to attract attention, talk about self, children/family ad nauseam | Insecurity<br>Selfish, self-serving |
| *Busybody* | Asks invasive questions | Rude or digging for gossip, blunt or over familiar | Competitive<br>Manipulative |
| *Tell All* | Tell too much, tells private information | Insensitive to listeners wishes, Not sensitive to social boundaries | Insecure and wish to bond<br>Seeking approval |
| *Beat-Around-the Bush* | Don't get to the point<br>Indirect about wishes<br>Unclear about wishes | Longwinded explanations, convoluted Words<br>conciliatory behaviour | Internal fear<br>Like status quo |
| *Too-Blunt* | Unaware of words/comments<br>Undiplomatic | Speak mind without thinking, over honest | Psychologically immature<br>Possible bully? |
| *Self-Effacing* | Fearful of upsetting anyone or being centre of attention, minimise own achievements, won't accept praise | "Sorry to intrude but..."<br>"I am sorry to take up your time but..."<br>"It was not difficult...." | Fearful<br>Low self-esteem<br>Passive-Aggressive manipulator |
| *I Don't Know* | Won't commit to an opinion<br>Sit on fence | "Yep" (without elaboration)<br>"Nope" (without elaboration)<br>"I don't know" (when asked opinion) | Intimidated<br>Insecure<br>Fearful |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Liar* | Indirect<br>Unnecessarily full explanations<br>Unexpected hesitation<br>Too complimentary/over sweet compliments | "Let me be honest with you...."<br>"Um, er..."<br>Repeating words or slips of the tongue | Not being truthful<br>Distracted?<br>Holding back<br>Manipulative |
| *Lisper* | Lisping | Problems with /w /r /s or /z | Immaturity/psychological trauma when young (caution, could be dental). |
| *Ethnic Flavouring* | Overuse of jargon or culture specific terms | | Wish to exclude you |
| *Slang* | Overuse of slang terms | | Behind the times<br>Excluding<br>Need to belong |
| *Tangent* | Tell you more than you need to know<br>Going off on tangents when speaking | Not giving simple or straightforward explanations | Not being truthful<br>Feeling guilty |
| *Stutter/Stammer* | Repeating first word or syllable | Hesitation<br>Long pause<br>Repetition | Lying or withholding<br>(NOTE: Disagreement amongst experts) |
| *Mumbler* | Unclear or quiet speech | Seek to avoid spotlight<br>Speak too quietly to be heard<br>(Use compassionate loving tones!) | Low self-esteem, shy/timid, embarrassed, hiding something? |
| *Fragmented* | Speaks in fragments | Hard to follow train of thought<br>Illogical statements | Brain dysfunction?<br>Drug reaction? |
| *Hesitator* | Takes too long to answer, or stops in mid-sentence | | Timid, insecure, lying?, Perfectionist? On medication? |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Chronic Complainer* | Moaning and groaning....<br>Finding fault in people and things.... | Feeling 'wronged'<br>Ask for help but then contradict | Worrier, Unappreciative, Destructive |
| *Few Words* | Don't share opinions<br>Too quiet | Short answers to questions<br>Not giving answers<br>Difficulty handling change | Afraid of being hurt, past trauma?<br>Inner rage/hostility<br>Self-absorbed/self-conscious |
| *Condescending* | Failure to listen<br>Talking without listening | Using big words<br>Speaking over slowly<br>"You should..." or "You had better..." | Snob<br>Feel superior<br>Controllers |
| *Verbal Instigator* | Saying unsettling things<br>Innuendo that annoys | Comments aimed at getting someone into trouble | Feel miserable<br>Two-faced<br>Aiming to upset |
| *Nagger* | Nagging behaviour<br>Critical comments | "Why must you..."<br>"Why do you...." | Control freak<br>(Main reason couples end up in therapy and get divorced!) |
| *Interrupter* | Interrupt other people before finishing sentence<br>Talking over people | Continue even if interrupted person gets annoyed.... | Control freak/Bully<br>Self-absorbed and unaware, selfish? Fearful? (core problem?) |
| *Curser* | Using curse words to sound hip or tough | Attention seeking use of expletives | Want to be hip<br>Keeping people at bay<br>Inner hostility<br>Bully/Control freak? |

# Vocal Code

Be aware that meanings are what people perceive rather than what those saying may be feeling.

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Style* | Deep vocal tone, lively, varied pitch, conveying emotions, robust. | Voice sounds attractive | Trustworthiness<br>Confidence |
| *Pitch* | Too High | Associated with sexual problems<br>Pitch rises when angry or upset | Immaturity<br>Stifled emotional growth<br>Insecurity, anger or fear |
| | Forced Too Low | Associated with insincerity | Obnoxious<br>Pompous |
| *Volume* | Too Soft | Others asking for speaker to repeat<br>Appearance of shyness | Hidden Anger (if deliberate)<br>Feeling of unworth<br>Sadness<br>Powerlessness |
| | Too Loud | Associated with anger<br>Maybe from a large family | Pompous<br>Arrogant/Controlling<br>Bullying/Competitive<br>Anger (Internal or External) |
| | Fading Out | Associated with frustration, and an inability to follow through thoughts and actions | Low self-esteem<br>Not manipulative/controlling<br>Will not complete tasks |
| *Quality* | Shaky | Could be due to medication<br>Timid or paranoid behaviour<br>Turning red if put on spot | Upset or Nervous<br>Worrying<br>Fearful of Life<br>Wanting approval |
| | Vocal Attacker | Sudden loud bursts<br>Little shocks (in conversation) | Anger<br>Aggression, competitiveness |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Nasal Whiner (Jaw moves) | Arouse humour in others<br>Butt of jokes<br>Perceived as unaware | Defensiveness<br>Aggression<br>Obnoxious or complaining |
| | Harsh/Gravelly | May evoke instant dislike | Aggression<br>Controlling<br>Bossy or Bullying<br>Angry |
| | Sexy or Breathy | Seductive tone<br>(Be cautious if used with several people – maybe genuine if restricted to one person) | Game playing<br>Manipulative<br>Insulting<br>Untrustworthy<br>Lacking confidence |
| | Frenetic or Manic Tones | Exhausting to listen to<br>(Can be due to chemical imbalance)<br>Motivating (in short burst)<br>Energetic | Controlling<br>Attention Seeking<br>Not Compassionate<br>Selfish<br>Anger |
| | Too Fast | Can be due to growing up in large family | Anxiety<br>Anger<br>Insecurity<br>Driven/Ambitious |
| | Agitated | Having 'attitude'<br>Argumentative tone | Chip on shoulder<br>Looking for fight |
| | Choppy/Staccato | Short simple sentences | Inflexibility<br>Self-righteous<br>Headstrong<br>Judgemental |
| | Nasal Whiner (No Jaw Movement) | Associated with stinginess, being uptight | Angry/Complaining<br>Pent-up rage |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Sounding Dull/Lifeless | Not in touch with emotions<br>Can be associated with depression or sadness<br>May make others angry | Apathy, uncaring, repressed<br>low self-esteem.<br>Passive-aggressive – could be indication of dishonesty |
| | Sugary Sweet | Incongruent behaviours<br>Double messages | Duplicitous<br>Untrustworthy |
| | Pitching Up | Maybe 'Uptalk' – tone used by teenagers within a peer groups. | Tentative<br>Insecure<br>Lack of confidence |
| | Too Slow/Deliberate | Continuing even if audience is bored<br>Could be due to neuromotor condition or medication. | Poor self-esteem<br>Arrogant<br>Hostility (if persistent)<br>Sadness |

# Body Language Code

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overview | Leaning | Towards.... | Interest or attraction |
| | | Sideways.... | Friendliness |
| | | Away.... | Boredom/Discomfort |
| | Zone Stepping | Can be cultural | Invasion = Advance/Hostility/Unawareness |
| | Standing Too Far Away | Offended by you, what is said, smell, look | Arrogant/Snobby, dislike, feeling threatened |
| | Mirroring Movements | Copying movement of person speaking | Closeness or love, falling in love (if mutual) |
| | Rocking Back and Forth | Relieves anxiety | Impatience or Anxiety (relief from) |
| | Fidgeting | Restlessness | Nervousness or irritation |
| | Head Tilting | Tilting to Side | Interest/Have attention |
| | Head Jerking | Jerking away | Something does not please (automatic reaction) |
| | Head Nodding | "Yes" Mode | Desire to be liked (if constant) |
| | | | Insecurity, fear of rejection |
| | | "Side to side" | Doubt/Reluctance/Deciding |
| | Head Bowing | (if not cultural) | Unsure, unhappy, low self-esteem |
| | Head Trusting Forward | Forward.... | Aggressive, threatened |
| | | Shaking/Trusting Back.... | Disdain or arrogance |
| | Head Scratching | | Confusion |
| | Shoulder Shrugging | If very quick, then sign of lying | Untruthful or Indifferent |
| | | | Approachability/Feeling Sexy |
| | | Unhurried, by a woman.... | |
| Posture | Slumped Over | Rounded shoulders.... | Resignation, low self-confidence, depression |
| | | If consistently..... | Withdrawing from situation or life |
| | | If temporary.... | Uninterested |
| | Lunging Forward | Associated with fight response | Anger (particularly if neck extended) |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Rigid | Authoritarian behaviour | Uptight or Inflexible |
| | Poser | Appear snobby, but actually…. | Insecure, self-conscious, narcissistic |
| | Closed | Cross arms over chest, or legs above the knee | Dislike or disagree |
| | Neutral | Folded hands in front or in lap, crossed legs | Undecided |
| | Bored | Turning away (head or body), leaning back | Bored (particularly if head rests on hand) |
| Arms | Crossed | Closing off behaviour, withdrawing | Defensiveness, discomfort, protecting |
| | Akimbo | Hands on hips, elbow protruding | Stay away/Don't mess (aggressive stance) |
| | Open | Arms behind back | Confidence |
| | Flailing | In west (not Mediterranean/Middle Eastern) | Highly emotional/extremely angry |
| Hands | Hidden | Also indicated by putting hands put into pockets | Hiding information |
| | Angry | Clenched – look for thumb. Jerky movements | Anger (if thumb hidden, then feels threatened) |
| | Lying | Less expressive, hidden or folded away, tension | Lying or suppressing strong emotions |
| | Honest | Palms exposed, fingers extended | Openness, honesty |
| | Charged | Hands/arms waving | Emotional/Committed |
| | Stubborn | Stiff thumb, fingers straight or forming a fist | Closed off emotionally, won't be persuaded |
| | Impatient | Drumming or tapping fingers…<br>Fiddling with jewellery/hair/pen… | Impatience<br>Nervousness/insecurity |
| | Pressured | Nail biting, hand wringing, fidgeting | Anxiety (feeling pressured), anger, frustration |
| | Bored | Fingers locked, thumbs twiddling | Bored |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Comfortable | Strong flowing movements, unmechanical | Feeling comfortable and at ease |
| | | Hands behind head, arms akimbo | |
| | Confident | Steepling with forefingers | Self-assured, confident |
| Touching | Self touching | Touching face.... | Uncomfortable, may not be telling truth |
| | | Touching eye or mouth.... | May indicate a lie has just been told |
| | | Squeezing or pinching nose.... | Suppressed discomfort/disagreement |
| | Non touchers | Stiff, upright posture can indicate insecurity | Discomfort, self-consumed, selfish |
| | | | Emotional/physical abuse as children? |
| | Hard touchers | Touch that squeezes and hurts | Inner rage/competitiveness |
| | Hand shakers | Comfortable and firm.... | Confident and open |
| | | Weak and awkward.... | Not sure how to 'connect', insecure, intimidated |
| | | Crushing and pain producing.... | Hostility, attempting dominance |
| | Hand talking | Calm talking with clenched fists | Dislike, anger or dishonesty |
| Feet | Honest | Together on ground, facing you.... | Openness/honesty |
| | | On heel or side.... | Dishonesty? |
| | Foot Jiggling | Jiggling/tapping foot | Boredom, wishing to get away |
| | Foot Locking | Wrapping foot around one leg | Nervousness or feeling uncomfortable |
| | Ankle Locking | Placing one ankle over the other | Holding back emotion or information |
| Legs | Confident | Legs apart, or together at knees (women).... | Openness, self-assured |
| | | Feet on ground pointing towards you.... | Honesty, frankness, attraction |
| | | Legs crossed (knee directly over knee) | Openness, confidence |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Lying | Crossed above the knee | Discomfort, lying |
| | Get-Me-Out-Of-Here | Head/torso out of alignment with feet/legs | Want to leave |
| | Independent | One leg on top of the other | Unconcerned, independent |
| | Dominant | Stretched out in front (crossed or not) | Strong willed, bullying? |
| | One-Legged | Lack of attention | Maybe habit, but can indicate lack of attention |
| Walking | Depressed | Head bowed, shoulder stoop, eyes down | Sad/depressed |
| | I'm All That | Chin raised, arms swinging exaggerated | Confidence, superiority, snobbishness |
| | Timid | Hunched, quiet movements | |
| | Uptight | Rigid, clipped, short steps, rigid arms | |
| | Confident | Even pace, bounce, head up, relaxed arms | |
| Clothes | Outdated | Ill-fitting, worn | Poor or not with the times |
| | Unkempt | Stained, smelly, unkempt | Low self-esteem, unconcerned about self |
| | High-Fashion | Follow latest fads | Want to fit in, insecurity |
| | Sexy | On regular basis.... | Sexually/emotionally insecure |
| | | On occasional basis.... | Seeking sexual attention |
| | Loud | On regular basis | Insecurity, low self-esteem |
| | | Irregular (or dashes of colour) | Happy, upbeat, creative |
| | Boring | Bland colours | Timid |
| | Overly Buttoned | | Disciplined, well-organised |
| | | | Rigid/inflexible (jeans pressed, underwear ironed) |
| | Inappropriate | Wearing inappropriate clothes on purpose | Belligerence, non-conformist, rebel, inner hostility |
| | | (Sexy clothing at work is included) | Bullying (but bespeaks insecurity) |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Tasteful | Clean styling (without being loud) | Self-esteem |
| | | ….if includes personal decoration/accessory… | Co-operative, open |
| Hygiene | Cleanliness | Generally | Self-esteem |
| | | No make-up (women) | Down-to-earth, open? |
| | | Re-applying make-up | Insecurity |
| | | Always wear make-up | Low self-esteem |
| | Hair Grooming | Groomed forward…. | Openness |
| | | Combed to one side…. | Not forthright, insecurity |
| | | Constantly changing hair styles…. | Insecurity, seeking identity |
| | Nail Grooming | Bitten to quick | Insecurity, anxiety |
| | Overly Meticulous | | Rigid, inflexible, insecure |

# Facial Code

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Overview* | Attraction | Frequent looking | Likes you |
| | | Looking for more than 2 seconds.... | Really likes you |
| | | Enlarged pupils.... | Strongly attracted to you |
| | | Left to right glancing, avoiding gaze.... | Shyness, trying to hide attraction |
| | | Mirroring smiles, nodding, copying.... | Admiration |
| | | If mirroring is mutual and done a lot.... | Falling or in love |
| | Sincerity | Alive, expressive, soft gaze (not hard or staring), teeth not clenched – jaw is relaxed | Open and honest, confident, interested |
| | Resignation, Hidden, Anger/Fear | Deadpan or aloof expression | Giving up or resigned to situation |
| | | Controlled facial movements | Hiding anger or fear |
| *Eyes* | Friendly | Frequent eye contact | |
| | Unfriendly | Avoiding eye contact | |
| | Lying | Smiling mouth with unsmiling eyes | If talking – possible lying |
| | | (Honest smile affects eyes and forehead) | If listening – dislikes what is being said |
| | Surprised | Eyes wide (showing sclera – whites of eyes) | If noticed after asking a question.... may have caught person in a lie |
| | | Eye brows raised | |
| | | Dropped lower jaw, lips apart | |
| | Scared | Eyebrows together | Fear |
| | | Lips drawn back | |
| | Angry | Eye scrunched up, unflickering | Attempting to intimidate, threaten |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Staring | ..with unchanged natural or kind expression.... | Sexual advance |
| | | ..with controlled rigid expression.... | Hostility |
| | Doubting | Eyes narrow, forehead furrowed | Unsure |
| | | One eyebrow lifted | Undecided |
| | Astonished | Eyes lifted... | Astonishment |
| | | Glance at ceiling or of disdain.... | Disbelief |
| | Shy | Sideways glance... | Shyness |
| | | ...with lowered head.... | Flirtation |
| | Sad, shameful | Eyes downward | Sadness |
| | | ...When breaking a gaze.... | Submissiveness |
| | I didn't do it | Strong direct eye contact during denial.... | Honesty |
| | Twitching | | Self-consciousness, stress |
| | | | Awareness of doing something wrong |
| | Excessive blinking | Generally.... | Nervousness, insecurity |
| | | When talking to another person.... | Lying or worried about not being believed |
| | Avoiding | N.B. Do not assume this means lying; just sign of discomfort or something being withheld | Dislike or intimidated/defensive |
| | | | Lying |
| | Raised, knitted or lowered brows | Smiling and quickly raised/lowered... | Person likes you, is interested in you |
| | | Smiling but eyebrows are not raised... | Person not bothered about you |
| | | Lowered, knitted eyebrows | Dislike, anxiety, fear |
| *Lips* | Smiling | Corners up, showing teeth, cheeks raised | Genuine friendliness, approachability |
| | Tight grin | Dull eyes, cheeks not raised | Dishonesty? |

| **Category** | *Behaviour* | *Additional Evidence* | *(Possible) Meanings* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Inappropriate smiling | ...and laughing... | Discomfort, nervousness |
| | Yawning | ....if not actually tired.... | Boredom |
| | | | Unwillingness to face subject or issue |
| | Gulping | ...upon hearing news.... | Shock or jealousy |
| | | ...accompanied by tight grin, dead eyes.... | Displeasure |
| | Hand to mouth | When talking.... | Lying |
| | | When listening.... | Dislike what is being said |
| | Lip Biting | Head is still.... | Internalised anger |
| | | Head is shaking.... | Intense anger |
| | Lip Licking | When talking... | Nervousness or lying |
| | | When listening or gazing... | Flirting, inviting sexual attention |
| | Cheek movements | Both raised.... | Openness, friendliness |
| | | One raised (distorted grin).... | Possible sarcasm |
| | | Rubbing cheek.... | Doubting |
| | | Going red.... | Feeling humiliated or embarrassed |
| *Chin* | Anger | Jutting forward (particularly children)... | Defiance or Anger |
| | Fear | Retracting chin so it rests on neck | Intimidated and fearful |
| | Boredom | Supported by hand... | Trying to be interested |
| | Concentration | Stroking.... | Intense concentration |
| | Criticism/Snobbery | Lifting of chin.... | |
| | Doubt | Rubbing or holding chin.... | Disbelief |
| *Nose* | Lying or Holding Back | Touching nose/mouth area | |
| *Ear* | Doubting or Confused | Scratching behind ear.... | |
| | Disbelief | Rubbing ear with thumb and finger | Person does not believe or does not want to hear what is being said |

# Bibliography, References and Recommended Reading

The references below – a list of all the works that influenced the development of this book - have been split into those recognised as academic works, and those that are more journalist or popular in their orientations. Some of the journalistic texts (e.g. The Feminine Mystique, Emotional Intelligence, The Ownership Solution, The Myth of Male Power etc.) are well researched and brim full of ideas that academics have, or are now, discussing regularly. Their **style,** however, is more journalistic and rhetorical, hence their inclusion in the first reading list. Recognised academic texts and journal articles are given in a second list.

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